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United Nations Office for Partnerships

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly decisions 52/466 and 53/475, wherein the Secretary-General was requested to inform the Assembly, on a regular basis, about the activities of the United Nations Office for Partnerships. It supplements the information contained in the previous reports of the Secretary-General (most recently, A/72/167).

The Office serves as a global gateway for public-private partnerships to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It oversees the areas set out below.

The United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) was established in 1998 to serve as the interface between the United Nations Foundation and the United Nations system. At the end of 2017, the cumulative allocations as approved by the Foundation for UNFIP projects to be implemented by the United Nations system had reached approximately $1.47 billion. Of this amount, it is estimated that $0.45 billion (about 31 per cent) represents core funds contributed by Ted Turner and $1.02 billion (about 69 per cent) was generated as co-financing from other partners. The total number of United Nations projects and programmes supported up to the end of 2017 by the Foundation through UNFIP stood at 641, implemented by 48 United Nations entities in 128 countries.

The United Nations Democracy Fund was established by the Secretary-General in July 2005 to support democratization around the world. It focuses on strengthening the voice of civil society, promoting human rights and ensuring the participation of all groups in democratic processes. Through the Fund, the Office has channelled over $160 million to nearly 750 projects in more than 130 countries, ranging from strengthening civil society leadership skills and promoting the participation of women and young people to media programmes that enable civil society to project its voice.

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The Office also provides partnership advisory and outreach services in response to demand from the United Nations system, Governments and non-State actors. It provides advice to and engages with a wide spectrum of partners to guide them and facilitate partnership events and initiatives in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In his report on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda (A/72/684-E/2018/7), the Secretary-General announced that the United Nations Office for Partnerships would be firmly established as the Organization's global gateway for partnerships. In 2018, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General initiated a review of the current operations of the United Nations Office for Partnerships to inform a reinvigorated platform for more effective partner engagement of public and private sector stakeholders, including civil society organizations, with the United Nations development system.

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I. United Nations Fund for International Partnerships

1. The United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) is a United Nations trust fund established in 1998 to serve as the interface between the United Nations Foundation and the United Nations system in support of high-impact projects implemented throughout the world by agencies of the United Nations system. Its work is overseen by the UNFIP Advisory Board, which is chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General.

2. The United Nations Foundation was founded 20 years ago by an entrepreneur and philanthropist, Ted Turner, as a public charity in the United States of America to channel Mr. Turner's historic $1 billion gift to support United Nations causes and activities.

3. As at 31 December 2017, the cumulative allocations approved by the Foundation for UNFIP projects had reached approximately $1.47 billion, of which $0.45 billion (about 31 per cent) represents core funds from Mr. Turner and $1.02 billion (about 69 per cent) represents co-financing from other partners. Since the Foundation's inception, 641 projects have been implemented or are under implementation by 48 United Nations entities in 128 countries. In 2017, the Foundation disbursed funding for projects totalling $26.1 million, the majority ($21 million) focused on global health. The selection of projects and initiatives supported by the Foundation through UNFIP is highlighted herein. The Foundation also provides other forms of support, particularly in the areas of advocacy and communications, as described below.

4. The Relationship Agreement between the United Nations and the United Nations Foundation, as established in 1998, has been renewed twice, most recently in 2014, when the partnership was renewed for an additional 10-year period under a revised and restated relationship agreement, as noted previously (see A/70/202). The Joint Coordination Committee, established under the new agreement, is the principal forum to ensure strong and timely communication and coordination between the United Nations and the Foundation. In 2017, as in previous years, the Committee met formally twice.

Support for innovative partnerships, campaigns and initiatives

5. The Foundation works in close collaboration with the United Nations to foster innovative partnerships, campaigns and initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The present report is organized according to the long-standing programmatic priorities of the Foundation, which have expanded to encompass issues aligned with and supportive of the Organization's evolving priorities. In November 2016, in anticipation of the shift to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, and with the then impending leadership transition at the United Nations, the Foundation's Board of Directors approved a strategy focused on five strategic priorities that reflect ways in which the Foundation could best support the United Nations:

(a) Investing in United Nations leadership;

(b) Accelerating action on the Sustainable Development Goals and climate change;

(c) Mobilizing diverse constituencies for change;

(d) Nurturing support for the United Nations in the United States;

(e) Cultivating innovative thought, relationships and opportunities towards the advancement of the priorities of the United Nations.

6. To advance these priorities, the Foundation relies on the following range of tools to support the United Nations:

(a) **Channelling.** The Foundation continues to work with a wide range of stakeholders to mobilize and channel financial resources to the United Nations system through UNFIP;

(b) **Convening.** The Foundation collaborates with various United Nations entities to bring stakeholders together and foster dialogue on a range of issues, including in the lead-up to important milestone events, such as Global Goals Week during the opening of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up and the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

(c) **Communicating.** The Foundation utilizes a diverse set of communications tools to build public support for the United Nations, give wider visibility to and improve understanding of issues high on the Organization's agenda, reach new constituencies, and galvanize action, including during key moments for the Organization. This work is carried out in close collaboration with the Department of Public Information and other communications experts from across the United Nations system;

(d) **Championing.** The Foundation champions the work of the United Nations through global and United States-based advocacy initiatives that connect citizens to the United Nations. The Foundation helps to foster a common understanding of the mission and values of the United Nations and ensure strong and sustained support by the Government of the United States for the United Nations;

(e) **Collaborating.** The Foundation is an institutional home for a number of multi-stakeholder initiatives in support of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, Family Planning 2020, the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, Data2X and the Digital Impact Alliance.

A. Global health

7. Since its inception, the Foundation has worked in close collaboration with UNFIP, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other United Nations entities to address key global health priorities, including the elimination of preventable diseases such as poliomyelitis, measles, rubella and malaria. The Foundation has also engaged in advocacy and partner mobilization for the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents, including through the Every Woman, Every Child initiative. More recently, the Foundation has supported the work of United Nations partners on systemic and integrated issues for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, including universal health coverage and antimicrobial resistance. The following sections provide an overview of global health grant-making through UNFIP in 2017.

Measles and rubella

8. Established in 2001, the Measles and Rubella Initiative is a global partnership committed to reducing measles deaths and limiting the number of children born with congenital rubella syndrome. It is jointly led by WHO, UNICEF, the American Red

Cross, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the United Nations Foundation. The aim of the Initiative is to advance the Global Measles and Rubella Strategic Plan 2012–2020 by helping countries to increase vaccination coverage for measles, rubella and other preventable diseases; fund, plan, implement and monitor high-quality supplementary campaigns; strengthen routine immunization efforts; investigate outbreaks; and provide technical and financial support for effective disease surveillance and outbreak response.

9. The role of the Foundation in connection with the Measles and Rubella Initiative is to carry out advocacy, mobilize resources and provide fiduciary services. Through its Shot@Life campaign, for example, the Foundation engages with civil society, policymakers and partners to reduce vaccine-preventable childhood deaths, in support of the efforts of UNICEF and WHO. The campaign is also intended to educate, connect with and empower the public in the United States to champion vaccines and advocate government funding for measles and rubella initiatives.

10. According to WHO, in 2016, for the first time, global measles deaths fell to below 100,000 per year, an 84 per cent decline in deaths since 2000. While this represents great progress, more work is needed to reach the nearly 21 million children around the world who have yet to be vaccinated against measles. The Measles and Rubella Initiative is committed to continuing its work with all countries and partners to reach every last child.

11. In 2017, more than $18 million was disbursed by the Foundation through UNFIP to UNICEF and WHO in support of measles and rubella initiatives and activities around the world. Specifically, $10 million was provided to UNICEF and WHO as part of a five-year GAVI Alliance grant to enable countries experiencing measles or rubella outbreaks to respond rapidly while the outbreaks are still relatively small and localized, with a view to preventing them from developing into large and widespread outbreaks.

12. The Foundation also provided a grant of $9,235,398 through UNFIP to UNICEF and WHO in support of the implementation of the latest phase of the Global Measles and Rubella Strategic Plan 2012–2020, to enable WHO to undertake high-quality supplementary immunization activities, strengthen immunization systems and implement case-based surveillance systems for measles in all six WHO regions.

Poliomyelitis

13. The Foundation has been a long-standing supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, a public-private partnership led by five core partners: the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Rotary International, UNICEF, WHO and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. At the time of its inception in 1988, polio was endemic in more than 125 countries and paralysed 350,000 children every year. Since then, the Initiative has overseen a 99 per cent reduction in annual cases of wild poliovirus. Today, wild poliovirus transmission remains endemic in only three countries and the world is closer than ever to being polio-free. The Foundation supports the Initiative through global and United States-focused advocacy, communications and public outreach and the provision of grants to United Nations partners.

14. The work of the Foundation on polio is guided by the annual strategy and workplan of the Initiative's Polio Advocacy and Communication Team. In addition to providing funding, the Foundation offers targeted support to advance elements of the Initiative's high-level advocacy goals and resource mobilization and communications strategies to ensure that the Initiative's partners have the tools they need to interrupt wild poliovirus transmission. In 2017, the Foundation provided a grant through

UNFIP to WHO to support the Initiative's advocacy, resource mobilization and communications efforts.

15. Similarly to the Measles and Rubella Initiative, the Foundation leverages the Shot@Life campaign to educate and empower the United States public to champion vaccines and government funding for polio eradication initiatives. In 2017, a grant of $1,155,343 was disbursed by the Foundation through UNFIP to UNICEF to support polio eradication initiatives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the purchase of 11 million doses of oral polio vaccines. Although major progress against polio has been made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has not reported a case of wild poliovirus since 2011, the country is still considered at substantial risk owing to poor subnational surveillance, immunization gaps and population movements. To ensure that the country stays polio-free, it is essential to maintain the momentum and reach every child.

16. In 2017, the Foundation continued its multi-year partnership on Shot@Life with Walgreens, a leading pharmacy chain in the United States, to raise awareness and help to provide vaccines to children in developing countries through a campaign. From September 2016 to August 2017, for every vaccine administered in the United States at Walgreens or Duane Reade pharmacies, an amount equivalent to the price of one vaccine was donated to the Shot@Life campaign. Since its inception in 2013, the campaign has helped to provide over 20 million life-saving vaccines.

Malaria

17. Since 2004, the Foundation has engaged with the United Nations and other partners to facilitate the distribution of bednets and combat the spread of malaria. For more than a decade, Nothing But Nets, a global grass-roots campaign run by the Foundation, has raised awareness and funding to combat malaria. The campaign enables individuals to join the fight against malaria by making a donation or engaging in advocacy with policymakers in relation to increased United States investment in malaria interventions.

18. Nothing But Nets works primarily with UNICEF and UNHCR to purchase insecticide-treated bednets and distribute them to affected countries in Africa. The resources raised also support a range of other malaria prevention and treatment solutions.

19. In 2017, the Foundation provided a parallel in-kind donation of 700,000 long-lasting insecticide-treated nets to UNICEF and UNHCR and grant support to fund bednet delivery, education, awareness-raising and gap analysis. For example, the Foundation provided a grant of $42,051 through UNFIP to UNHCR and a parallel in-kind donation of 99,000 long-lasting insecticide-treated nets to support 198,000 beneficiaries in sub-Saharan Africa.

B. Women, girls and population

20. Since its inception, the Foundation has worked with various United Nations partners, including UNFPA, UN-Women, UNICEF and UNHCR, to promote issues that are central to the 2030 Agenda, such as gender equality, maternal health, sexual and reproductive health and rights, the rights of adolescent girls, and gender-based violence. The support provided by the Foundation has included grant-making, communications work, partnership-building and advocacy. The projects and initiatives supported by the Foundation through UNFIP in 2017 are summarized below.

Adolescent girls

21. In September 2010, in response to calls by the United Nations and other actors for intensified efforts to address the needs and rights of adolescent girls, the Foundation launched Girl Up, an advocacy and fundraising campaign that engages with adolescent girls across the United States and around the world to improve the lives of other adolescent girls. The objective of Girl Up is to engage, train and inspire girls to be leaders and create change for equality. Girl Up girls raise funds for United Nations partners, carry out advocacy work on policy issues that affect adolescent girls and raise awareness of the challenges facing girls around the world. Since its launch, the campaign has inspired more than 2,400 Girl Up clubs in 102 countries, in which members build their leadership skills and work to achieve gender equality for girls around the world.

22. In 2017, through corporate partners and the girls' fundraising efforts, the Foundation provided a grant of $250,000 through UNFIP to continue its support for the UNFPA Action for Adolescent Girls initiative in Guatemala. This initiative seeks to protect adolescent girls' rights, in particular by delaying the age at which they marry and bear children, empowering the most marginalized girls and elevating their status in their communities.

Family planning

23. In 2017, in partnership with Merck for Mothers, the Foundation provided a grant of $445,990 through UNFIP to UNFPA for the second phase of a project being implemented in the Philippines called Business Action for Family Planning Access, which aims to broaden private sector support for the promotion of women's health and access to family planning services in the workplace. The three main objectives of the project are expanding actionable commitments from companies in the Philippines to support and promote women's health and provide access to family planning information and services through workplace programmes; strengthening implementation through technical assistance and gathering evidence from the private sector on women's health and family planning as a basis for strengthening new and existing investments; and communicating the evidence base from successful women's health programmes in the workplace.

C. Energy and climate

24. For the past 20 years, the Foundation has worked closely with the United Nations to advance progress towards a safer, cleaner, more equitable and climate-friendly energy future. The Foundation is currently focusing its efforts on accelerating progress towards the implementation of the Paris Agreement, while continuing to support the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, launched by the Secretary-General in 2011 and now an international not-for-profit organization.

25. In 2017, the Foundation continued to advance the implementation of the Paris Agreement in a number of areas, including support for subnational climate action to contribute to the targets contained in the Agreement and support for the Organization's leadership role on the issue of climate change. The Foundation supports three initiatives that seek to advance the energy access agenda in support of Sustainable Energy for All, namely Powering Healthcare, the Energy Access Practitioner Network and the Clean Energy Mini-grids Partnership.

Powering Healthcare

26. In 2013, at the request of the leadership of Sustainable Energy for All, the Foundation launched an initiative to promote innovative clean energy solutions for health-care facilities in developing countries, as a way of improving the availability and quality of health-care services, in particular for women and children. The Foundation initiated a pilot project in partnership with WHO and the Governments of Ghana and Uganda that uses innovative solar photovoltaic technology to bring power to 62 under-electrified primary health-care facilities in both countries. The pilot project, which was made possible thanks to the support of the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, under its Sustainable Energy for Women and Girls programme, demonstrates how access to modern, affordable and sustainable electricity services can enhance the delivery of health-care services and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. WHO, as a key partner of the Foundation on the project, is carrying out an independent study to determine the impact of improved access to power on the quality of health-care services. The Foundation is providing a three-year grant of $500,000, covering the period 2016–2018, to WHO through UNFIP to support its work on the study.

D. Capacity development

27. In addition to providing financial support in its historic programmatic areas, the Foundation has sought to invest in United Nations leadership and support other priority areas that can have a transformative and catalytic impact. In 2017, the Foundation provided direct and indirect support to the United Nations system to address time-sensitive and high-impact initiatives, as detailed below.

Transition support

28. In 2017, the Foundation provided $330,844 through UNFIP to support the transition team established by the Secretary-General designate to help him prepare prior to and immediately following the assumption of his duties on 1 January 2017. Specifically, the funding allowed the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and UNHCR to offset travel, daily subsistence allowance and salary costs for advisers appointed by the Secretary-General designate to support the transition process for a period of six months.

Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth

29. The Foundation provided two grants to support the work of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth in 2017. First, with support from the Nielsen Foundation, it provided a grant of $56,500 through UNFIP to support Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals, an annual class of young change-makers appointed to leverage their unique resources, networks and skills to advocate the Goals among young people, and Measuring the State of Youth in the Sustainable Development Goals, an initiative that seeks to highlight the status of young people, the progress made to date and areas of urgent need in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. The Foundation also provided a $55,000 grant through UNFIP to the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth to support its general operations.

Instant Network Schools Programme

30. With funding support from the Vodafone Americas Foundation, the United Nations Foundation provided UNHCR with a grant of $1,040,699 through UNFIP in support of the Instant Network Schools programme. The programme was set up to

deliver education programmes for children in refugee camps by facilitating access to the Internet and technology.

Additional grants

31. In addition, the Foundation, with support from partners, provided a further $481,619 in grants through UNFIP to various United Nations entities for a range of projects in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

E. Fiduciary agreements

32. Over the years, a number of United Nations entities have requested the assistance of the Foundation as a fiduciary or fiscal agent to receive and disburse contributions from corporations and private individuals in support of their specific campaigns and programmes. Many agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations lack a functioning United States-based charitable organization that is exempt from taxation under section 501 (c) (3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code, thereby making it difficult for them to compete for tax-deductible contributions from United States companies or companies with affiliates in that country, as well as from United States citizens. As a United States public charity and fiscal agent for receiving and disbursing such contributions through UNFIP, the Foundation is well suited to assist the United Nations in that regard.

33. In 2017, the Foundation, through UNFIP, provided a total of $569,101 in funding to five United Nations entities through fiduciary channels. Specifically, $14,440 was provided to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; $36,553 was provided to the Global Partnership to Stop Tuberculosis managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services; $43,806 was provided to the Office of Legal Affairs to enhance the training activities of the United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law; $51,088 was provided to the Central Emergency Response Fund of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; $201,851 was provided to the country-based pooled funds managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and $221,363 was provided to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in support of eliminating poverty in the world through communication, public outreach and fundraising.

F. Advocacy and communications

34. In 2017, the Foundation continued to deploy, test and develop a range of innovative advocacy and communications tools to build diverse and robust constituencies for the Sustainable Development Goals, climate action and broader United Nations leadership, both globally and within the United States. In collaboration with the Department of Public Information and other United Nations entities, the Foundation helped to provide media zones for the Sustainable Development Goals during the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and sessions of the General Assembly; organized training courses for journalists in 19 countries to improve reporting on the Goals; ran innovative digital media campaigns; and supported several public-facing events and initiatives to broaden the base of support for the work of the United Nations, including the Social Good Summit and the Global Moms Challenge.

Eighth annual Social Good Summit

35. The Social Good Summit is an annual convening of prominent thought leaders, media executives, technology experts, grass-roots activists and global citizens from around the world to explore technology's potential to advance progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The eighth Summit, the theme of which was "Future in Focus: #2030NOW", was held on 17 September 2017 and hosted in collaboration with UNDP, Mashable and 92Y. During the Summit, speakers from 21 countries addressed various issues related to the Goals. Some 1,200 people attended, while the livestream of the Summit received over 60,000 unique views, representing 185 countries. The Summit also generated 2.1 billion social media impressions.

Global Moms Challenge

36. The Global Moms Challenge is an advocacy initiative created by the Foundation in 2011 to support the health and well-being of mothers and children and to advance global health priorities aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. The initiative connects mothers throughout the United States and the world to educate and mobilize partners to take action, with a view to increasing access to life-saving medicine, vital nutrition, education and opportunities to empower women and lift up communities. This community of almost 250,000 mothers and supporters operates in support of the Every Woman, Every Child initiative. The initiative includes the Moms +SocialGood annual event and the Global Moms Relay, a digital media campaign to amplify the conversation about the challenges faced by mothers.

37. In 2017, through funds raised by the Global Moms Relay, the Foundation, with the support of Johnson & Johnson, provided UNFPA with a grant of $99,997 through UNFIP to address the vulnerability of adolescent girls and women in rural parts of Haiti by providing them with access to skilled health-care services, education, counselling and supplies for newborn babies. The project targeted over 8,000 women and girls living in the areas most affected by Hurricane Matthew.

G. Multi-stakeholder alliances

38. The Foundation serves as an institutional home for several independent multi-stakeholder initiatives that accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. These include:

(a) **Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves**. The Alliance is a public-private initiative hosted by the Foundation to raise awareness and stimulate market demand and support for clean cooking solutions that improve health and livelihoods, empower women and protect the environment. Launched in 2010, the Alliance works in close collaboration with WHO, UNDP, UNHCR, UN-Women, the United Nations Environment Programme and other United Nations entities to promote the universal adoption of clean cooking solutions by enhancing demand for clean cookstoves and fuels, improving the supply of clean cookstoves and fuels, and fostering an enabling policy environment in which clean cooking businesses can thrive.

(b) **Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data**. The Partnership is a global network of over 320 partners, including Governments, businesses, civil society, international organizations, academia, foundations and statistics agencies that are committed to ensuring that the international community has the data needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. To do this, the Partnership advocates the role of data in driving sustainable development at the global, regional and national levels; facilitates collaboration across all sectors to innovate, build capacity and share knowledge; improves data access and interoperability mechanisms and standards; and

works with in-country partners to create and implement robust data ecosystems. Since November 2015, the Foundation has served as the institutional home for the secretariat of the Partnership. The Deputy Secretary-General is the honorary Chair of the Partnership's Board of Directors.

(c) **Data2X**. An initiative of the United Nations Foundation, Data2X is a collaborative technical and advocacy platform dedicated to improving the quality, availability and use of gender data to make a practical difference to the lives of women and girls worldwide. It receives support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and works with United Nations agencies, Governments, civil society, academics and the private sector to close gender data gaps, promote expanded and unbiased gender data collection, and use gender data to improve policies, strategies and decision-making. In 2017, through the work of Data2X, the United Nations Foundation, with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, provided $340,000 through UNFIP to the International Labour Organization to improve the well-being of workers and reduce inequalities in the workplace through better labour market policies. A project on statistics on women's work and employment and time use has been initiated, in partnership with the World Bank, to provide guidance on how best to capture all forms of women's work in national statistics by testing various methods through different household surveys.

(d) **Digital Impact Alliance**. Launched in 2016, the Alliance is a partnership between the United States Agency for International Development, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Government of Sweden and the United Nations Foundation, the aim of which is to overcome the barriers to using digital solutions in support of global development. The Alliance works closely with United Nations partners, Governments, industry and civil society to pursue three major areas of impact: expediting the deployment of digital technology; expanding the availability of digital distribution channels; and ensuring responsible and widespread access to and use of data for development. In 2017, the Foundation and the Alliance, in collaboration with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, provided a grant of $411,950 through UNFIP to support the efforts of the International Telecommunication Union to catalyse digital innovations that contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The project aims to support appropriate, affordable and scalable solutions through cross-sectoral collaboration among Governments, the private sector, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other development organizations.

(e) **Family Planning 2020**. Family Planning 2020 is a global community of partners working with Governments, civil society, multilateral organizations, the private sector and the research and development community to advance rights-based family planning. The partnership was launched at the London Summit on Family Planning, in 2012, with the goal of enabling 120 million additional women and girls in the world's poorest countries to use voluntary, modern forms of contraception by 2020. The partnership now has more than 125 commitment-makers that work together to address the policy, financing, delivery and sociocultural barriers to women's access to contraceptive information, services and supplies, and in doing so, make progress on ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights by 2030. The United Nations Foundation serves as the host of Family Planning 2020, which is stewarded by a secretariat and co-chaired by UNFPA and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Family Planning 2020 also comprises a reference group and four core partners, which are the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNFPA, the United States Agency for International Development and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom. The focal points in each country are key partners for driving forward progress on family planning goals. Below is an

overview of the grants awarded in 2017 through UNFIP under the umbrella of Family Planning 2020.

Strengthening national ownership and financial support for family planning in the Lao People's Democratic Republic

39. The Foundation, in partnership with the National Philanthropic Trust, provided a grant of $75,000 through UNFIP to UNFPA to support the holding of the first National Conference on Family Planning by the Ministry of Health of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in May 2017, under the theme "Investing in family planning for prosperity". The aim of the Conference was to help the Government to fulfil its pledge to reduce the national maternal mortality ratio by increasing the use of modern contraceptive methods from 42 per cent to 65 per cent by 2020.

Strengthening access to and use of family planning and reproductive health services in Minawao refugee camp in Cameroon

40. In 2017, the Foundation and Bloomberg Philanthropies jointly provided $142,560 through UNFIP to UNFPA to amplify the existing family planning programme at Minawao refugee camp, in northern Cameroon, and address neonatal and maternal deaths.

Increasing access to and use of modern contraceptives by unmarried young migrant workers in industrial zones of Viet Nam

41. The Foundation provided a grant of $120,000 through UNFIP to UNFPA to improve access to and utilization of family planning information, counselling and high-quality, modern contraceptive services for 125,000 unmarried young migrant workers in industrial zones of Viet Nam.

Advancing progestin subdermal implant provision through civil society in the Philippines

42. The Foundation provided a grant of $208,440 through UNFIP to UNFPA to help with the demand for modern family planning services and to improve universal access to high-quality reproductive health-care services for 40,000 women of reproductive age in the Philippines who choose to use progestin subdermal implants.

II. United Nations Democracy Fund

43. The United Nations Democracy Fund was established during the 2005 World Summit as a United Nations general trust fund and launched in April 2006. Since then, the grant-making body has become clearly defined as a fund for civil society organizations. It is the only United Nations entity that has the word "democracy" in its name, the only United Nations body with the primary purpose of supporting democracy by empowering civil society and one of the youngest entities in the United Nations system. The large majority of project funds go to local civil society organizations in countries in both the transition and consolidation phases of democratization. By supporting the "demand" rather than the "supply" side of democratization, the Fund plays a distinct and unique role in complementing and enhancing the more traditional work of the United Nations — the work with Governments — to strengthen democratic governance around the world.

44. In the years since its creation, the Fund has experienced considerable growth in its portfolio, its donor base, its impact and its visibility. The aim of its projects is to strengthen the voice of civil society, promote human rights and encourage the

participation of all groups in democratic processes. In its first 11 rounds of funding, the Fund supported almost 750 projects in more than 130 countries, with a total disbursement of some $160 million. The projects ranged from supporting civil society efforts for accountability and transparency to building capacity for strengthening good governance and the rule of law.

A. Eleventh round of funding

45. The call for project proposals for the Fund's eleventh round was open from 20 November to 20 December 2016. The Fund received 3,002 project proposals from civil society, reflecting the continued high demand for support from the Fund to finance projects that strengthen the voice of civil society, promote human rights and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes. The proposals originated from organizations in 152 countries, the vast majority of them local non-governmental organizations in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean.

46. The response added to the considerable growth that the Fund has experienced since its creation in 2005, with initiatives that reflect a focus on strengthening the voice of civil society, thereby increasing concentration on the demand side of democracy, rather than on the supply side.

47. In the eleventh round, 48 projects were funded at a total cost of $8,657,000. As defined by their key activities, the projects are disaggregated as follows:

(a) Youth engagement (16 per cent);

(b) Rule of law and human rights (18 per cent);

(c) Community activism (6 per cent);

(d) Strengthening interaction with Governments (23 per cent);

(e) Media and freedom of information (6 per cent);

(f) Empowerment of women (27 per cent);

(g) Tools for knowledge (4 per cent).

B. Donor base

48. The cumulative total amount of contributions received from 2005 to 2016 exceeded $186 million.

C. Evaluation

49. A revised post-project evaluation strategy was approved by the Fund's Advisory Board in November 2016. The revised strategy is designed to make better use of local and regional expertise and to ensure that the lessons learned from evaluations are embedded in the Fund's own capacity. The majority of the evaluations were positive, while also providing valuable lessons learned for the Fund's knowledge management. Lessons learned from evaluations have been made available on an interactive searchable platform (www.undeflessonslearned.org), launched in May 2017. The platform allows civil society organizations and other interested stakeholders to draw on the wealth of knowledge that the Fund has gained from its 12 years of implementing projects. The Fund also published all post-project evaluations on its

public website, as decided by its Advisory Board. In that way, the Fund consolidated its position as one of the most transparent entities within the United Nations system.

D. Governance

50. The two governing mechanisms of the Fund, the Advisory Board and the Programme Consultative Group, continued to play an active and guiding role during 2017. The Advisory Board provided policy guidance for the development of programme frameworks and funding guidelines, considered proposals for funding, and recommended funding proposals for approval by the Secretary-General. The Board comprises those Member States that have made the largest seven cumulative financial contributions to the Fund over the previous three years; six Member States reflecting geographical diversity; two international civil society organizations; and three individuals serving in a personal capacity.

51. The Programme Consultative Group provided input and quality control in the project selection process and the implementation phase, making use of the specific expertise of each of its entities: the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Peacebuilding Support Office, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNHCR, UNDP and UN-Women. The Fund also benefits from the advice and support of resident coordinators in the field, who provide input into the project selection process and help with the monitoring of project implementation.

E. Twelfth round of funding

52. The Fund launched its twelfth round of calls for project proposals in November 2017. When applications closed, on 20 December 2017, the Fund had received 2,429 proposals, the vast majority of applications from local or regional civil society organizations in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Arab region and Eastern Europe. In accordance with the annual timetable adhered to by the Fund, the applications were assessed by March 2017 and the Advisory Board recommended a shortlist in May, after which the Fund advised the permanent missions of those Member States in which listed projects were to take place. The shortlist was then submitted to the Secretary-General for approval. Short-listed applicants were to be asked to submit draft project documents by the middle of 2018 to be negotiated with the Fund. The first tranches of project funding are to be disbursed from September, once again in a timeline that compares favourably with international standards.

F. Democracy in action

53. Examples of the Fund's projects are the following:

(a) **Support for the civic participation of vulnerable young people in Côte d'Ivoire**. The aim of this project is to enable vulnerable young people to participate in political processes by creating a citizen consultation framework and a curriculum for human rights education. Using a participatory approach, project activities include leadership and advocacy training. Participants also have the opportunity to create their own projects so they can use the skills they have learned to advocate the adoption and implementation of policies for vulnerable children and young people.

(b) **Engaging men and boys in preventing violence against women and girls to build a democratic society in Afghanistan**. The project worked with young men to overcome attitudes that make violence against women acceptable. The project

identified youth leaders, who then created and ran their own awareness campaign sessions for other men and boys. As a result of their participation in the project, the young men have become resources in their own villages who can carry out advocacy for women's rights. They now have a much better understanding and awareness of the causes of violence against women and how to achieve gender equality.

(c) **Online platform for citizen participation in Quito, Ecuador**. The project aimed to enhance community engagement through the creation of platforms where citizens could build solidarity in their communities and promote active civic participation. The online platform serves as a knowledge-sharing space for civil society and citizens in Quito to foster dialogue. They are encouraged to exchange skills and knowledge by offering or requesting training courses. In addition to training citizens to use the platform, the project worked with local agencies to increase dialogue, promote voluntary action and enhance social and cultural cohesion among members of the community.

III. Partnership advisory and outreach services

54. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an immense opportunity for all stakeholders to work collaboratively across sectors and thematic areas, forging genuine partnerships towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The scale and ambition of the Goals make them unattainable without robust partnerships. Achieving the level and quality of partnerships required to deliver the Goals requires a significant and targeted effort to build an enabling environment for partnering, including institutional capacities, convening and supporting infrastructure and a supportive policy environment.

55. As reflected in Goal 17 on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development, ensuring a sustainable future requires cross-sectoral collaboration and meaningful partnerships on an unprecedented scale. It is key that competitive advantages and resources, including knowledge, science, technology and finance, are utilized to create synergies and find innovative solutions. Governments, the private sector, civil society and the United Nations need to work together in broader and deeper partnerships to harness the full potential of each sector and make the best of their respective capabilities and resources.

56. Building on existing partnership efforts, the United Nations is uniquely placed to offer the platforms needed for all actors to come together, build trust and mobilize their respective assets to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

57. In 2017, numerous companies, foundations and civil society organizations approached the United Nations Office for Partnerships to seek advice and explore paths of engagement with the United Nations. Most enquiries were related to mapping specific collaborative opportunities and identifying relevant partners within the United Nations system towards the advancement of the Goals. To highlight the outstanding work carried out by non-State actors committed to achieving the Goals and inspire new partnership initiatives, the Office convened, in collaboration with other United Nations entities, several briefings and events. Selected key partnership events are listed below.

Women's Empowerment Principles

58. On 15 March 2017, UN-Women, the United Nations Global Compact, the United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the United Nations Office for Partnerships held the Women's Empowerment Principles Forum, the theme of which

was "Measuring success, making it count: business investing in women and girls". The event, held in New York, brought together more than 400 cross-sector leaders and innovators, as well as representatives of the United Nations system and civil society. The Forum explored the role of the private sector in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with a special focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Knowledge Summit

59. On 11 May 2017, the Permanent Mission of Argentina, the International Council for Small Business and the United Nations Office for Partnerships jointly convened the Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Knowledge Summit at Headquarters. The event emphasized the role of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises as catalysts for advancing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and their potential to make a long-lasting positive impact on global development needs. Furthermore, the event drew attention to General Assembly resolution 71/279, designating 27 June as Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day.

2017 Partnership Exchange

60. On the occasion of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Office for Partnerships jointly convened the second annual Partnership Exchange event on 17 July 2017 at Headquarters. Under the theme "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", the three main objectives of the event were to enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, to provide a learning platform for multi-stakeholder partnership commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals and to share knowledge and expertise to support the achievement of the Goals. The event brought together almost 500 participants representing multi-stakeholder partnerships, Governments, the United Nations and other stakeholders.

Media for Social Impact Summit 2017

61. Organized by the United Nations Office for Partnerships and the PVBLIC Foundation, the Media for Social Impact Summit was held on 14 September 2017 at Headquarters. The event brought together over 450 leaders of media companies, advertising firms, creative agencies, communication experts and senior United Nations representatives to highlight the power of media in driving social change. The summit showcased innovative social campaigns through keynote speeches, interviews, case studies and round-table discussions, providing a unique opportunity to build partnerships to further social progress and increase momentum towards global action on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Youth-led peacebuilding: lessons from the field

62. The Permanent Mission of Jordan, the not-for-profit organization Generations for Peace and the United Nations Office for Partnerships jointly convened an event entitled "Youth-led peacebuilding: lessons from the field" on 21 September 2017 at Headquarters. The event provided an engagement platform for practitioners and partners with a shared interest in youth-led peacebuilding and showcased good practices in engaging youth and supporting youth-led peacebuilding. Specifically, the event focused on youth leadership, community empowerment, tolerance and responsible citizenship to create and sustain peaceful communities.

IV. Conclusions

63. Mr. Turner's unprecedented philanthropic contribution through the United Nations Foundation and UNFIP has contributed significantly to an increased mobilization of resources and multi-stakeholder partnerships in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

64. The United Nations Democracy Fund is now 13 years old and has proved to be a highly innovative and effective initiative. It has successfully complemented the work of many United Nations agencies that concentrate on the "supply" side of democratic institutions by focusing on the "demand" side through grants to local civil society organizations.

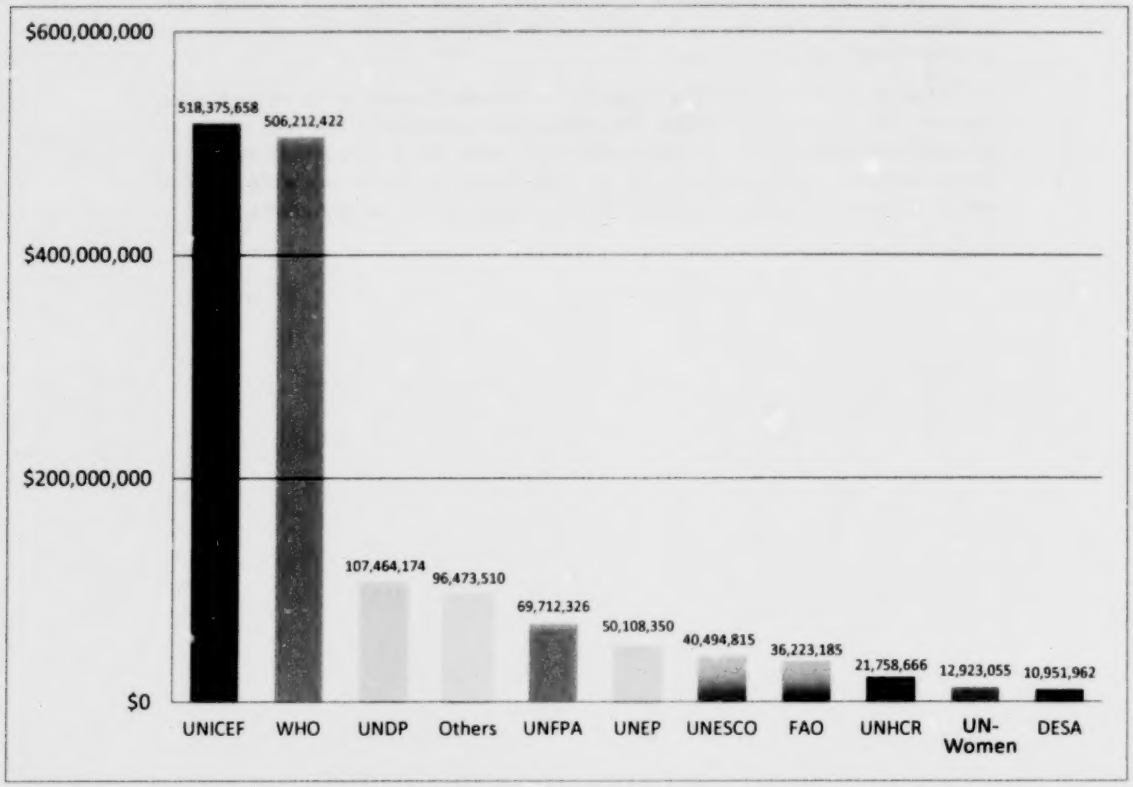
65. The operation of UNFIP and the Fund remains the core work of the United Nations Office for Partnerships. The Office has continued to convene events to increase awareness and mobilize action towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and provide advisory services to a wide range of non-State actors that share a commitment to realizing the 2030 Agenda.

Annex I

United Nations Fund for International Partnerships: distribution of funds and projects

A. Cumulative allocations approved by the United Nations Foundation, 1998–2017, distributed by implementing partners

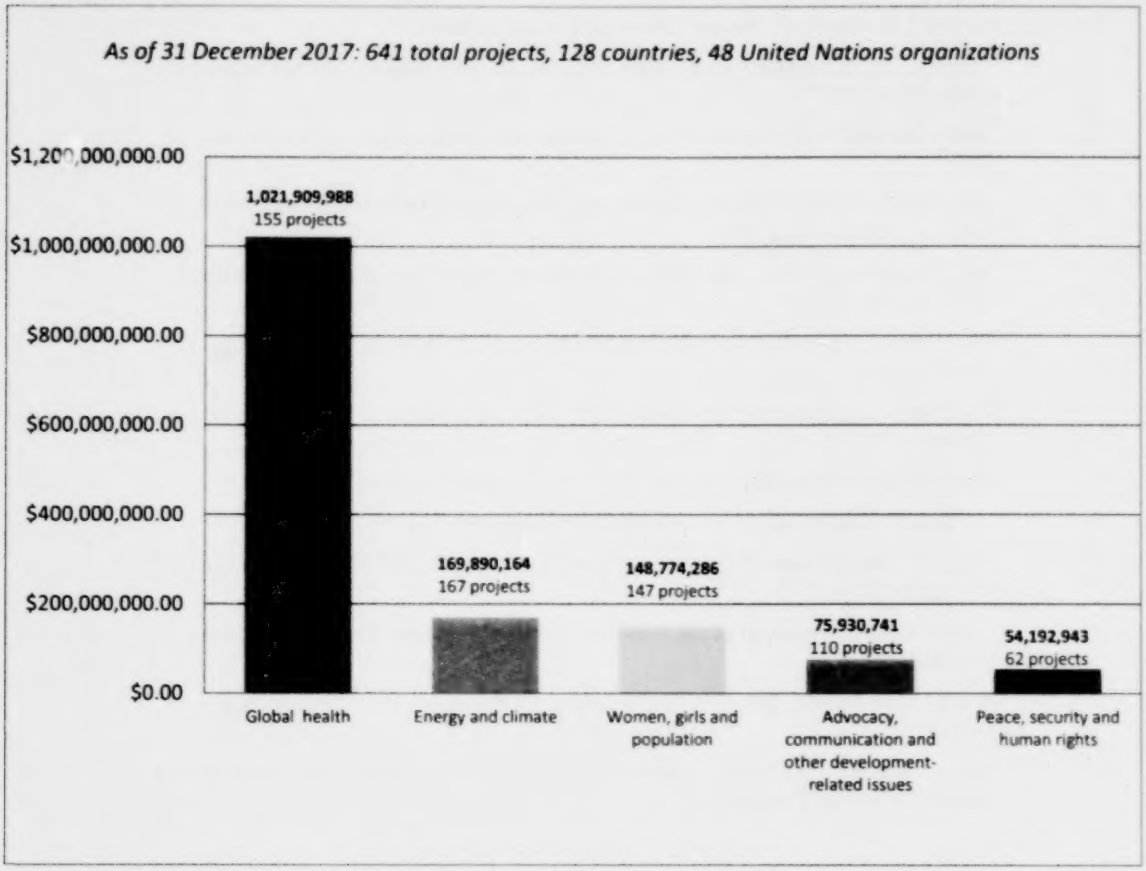
(United States dollars)



Abbreviations: DESA, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; UNDP, United Nations Development Programme; UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme; UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund; UNHCR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund; UN-Women, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; WHO, World Health Organization.

B. Thematic distribution of projects approved by the United Nations Foundation, 1998–2017

($1,470,698,122)



Annex II

Composition of the Advisory Board of the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships 2017

Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General (Chair)

Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, President of the Economic and Social Council (until 26 July 2017)

Marie Chatardová, President of the Economic and Social Council (since 27 July 2017)

Dian Triansyah Djani, Chair of the Second Committee of the General Assembly (until 11 September 2017)

Sven Jürgenson, Chair of the Second Committee of the General Assembly (since 12 September 2017)

Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (until 31 July 2017)

Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (since 1 August 2017)

Yukio Takasu, Under-Secretary-General for Management (until 31 May 2017)

Jan Beagle, Under-Secretary-General for Management (since 1 June 2017)

Susan M. Davis, former President and Chief Executive Officer, BRAC USA (until 9 May 2017)

Luis A. Ubiñas, President of the Board of Trustees, Pan American Development Foundation

Bruce Usher, Faculty Director, Social Enterprise Program, Columbia Business School

William Kennedy (ex officio), Senior Programme Officer, Officer-in-Charge, United Nations Office for Partnerships

Annex III

Financial contributions to the United Nations Democracy Fund, by donor, as at 31 December 2017

(United States dollars)

Donor	*Cumulative contribution received*
Algeria	100 000
Argentina	30 000
Australia	9 212 424
Bulgaria	10 000
Canada	754 935
Chile	380 000
Croatia	71 000
Cyprus	5 000
Czechia	216 939
Denmark	265 018
Ecuador	5 000
Estonia	10 395
France	4 793 716
Georgia	24 943
Germany	20 006 910
Hungary	75 000
India	31 912 543
Iraq	5 000
Ireland	658 724
Israel	57 500
Italy	2 947 800
Japan	10 180 000
Latvia	15 000
Libya	15 000
Lithuania	49 332
Madagascar	5 000
Malta	11 347
Mongolia	10 000
Morocco	5 000
Panama	37 000
Peru	90 849
Poland	858 755
Portugal	150 000
Qatar	10 000 000
Republic of Korea	1 100 000
Romania	472 860
Senegal	100 000
Slovakia	34 217

Donor	*Cumulative contribution received*
Slovenia	127 924
Spain	5 043 311
Sri Lanka	5 000
Sweden	21 299 050
Turkey	290 000
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	683 653
United States of America	63 076 000
Other	2 230
Total	**185 204 375**

Annex IV

Composition of the Advisory Board of the United Nations Democracy Fund in 2017

Member States

Algeria
Australia
Barbados
Colombia
Germany
India
Japan
Nigeria
Poland
Slovakia
Sri Lanka
Sweden
United States of America

Non-governmental organizations

International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
TECHO

Individuals

Aracelly Santana
Jeffrey Wright

United Nations A/73/223

General Assembly

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Seventy-third session
Item 70 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Follow-up to the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report assesses the steps taken in 2017 to achieve a world fit for children and highlights the gaps in achievement as well as the strategic shifts necessary to achieve the unmet goals.

The report was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution S-27/2, adopted at the twenty-seventh special session in 2002, and resolutions 58/282 and 61/272, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report regularly on progress made in implementing the Plan of Action included in the annex to resolution S-27/2.

* A/73/150.

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I. Introduction

1. At the special session of the General Assembly on children, held in 2002, delegations from 190 countries adopted the document entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex), containing a Declaration and Plan of Action. In the document, Governments made a commitment to a time-bound set of goals for children and young people, with a particular focus on: (a) promoting healthy lives; (b) providing quality education; (c) protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and (d) combating HIV and AIDS. The present report provides the sixteenth update on progress made in follow-up to the special session.

2. The past year marked the second year of putting into practice the wide-ranging global accords reached in 2015, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1), the Sendai Declaration and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (resolution 69/283, annexes I and II), the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. These accords provide key directions to realizing the rights of all children everywhere and to achieving the vision of the 2030 Agenda: a world in which no child is left behind.

3. A child's chance to survive and thrive was much greater in 2017 than it was when the global community adopted the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. There continues to be clear evidence of significant progress made in child survival, nutrition and primary school enrolment and in the reduction of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, among other areas. The absolute number of children dying before their fifth birthday has fallen by more than 50 per cent, from 12.6 million in 1990 to approximately 5.6 million in 2016. The rate of stunted children under 5 years of age declined from 39 per cent in 1990 to 22 per cent in 2017. In 2017, wasting continued to threaten the lives of an estimated 7 per cent of children under the age of 5 years, or nearly 51 million children globally, while 38 million children under the age of 5 years (6 per cent) were overweight. An estimated 6.2 million malaria deaths were averted between 2001 and 2015, and some 5.9 million of these (95 per cent) were children under the age of five. The number of out-of-school children of primary school age worldwide fell by almost 50 per cent over the 17 years from 1999 to 2016, from 107 million to an estimated 63 million. In 2015, 89 per cent of the global population used a basic drinking water service, compared with 81 per cent in 2000.

4. Persistent and, in many cases, growing inequalities continue, depriving the poorest and most excluded children of the chance to fulfil their potential. In 2017, 2.3 billion people worldwide still lacked access to a basic sanitation service,[1] and 892 million continued to practice open defecation. An estimated 36.7 million people were living with HIV in 2016, approximately 2.1 million of whom were children younger than 15 years of age. The most recent available survey data indicates that in sub-Saharan Africa, only 22 per cent of adolescent girls of 15 to 19 years of age and 23 per cent of adolescent boys of the same age have a comprehensive knowledge of HIV. The practice of child marriage has slowly declined since the early 1990s, but globally, the gap in child marriage rates between girls from the wealthiest and the poorest quintiles has increased dramatically.

5. In 2017, multiple and severe humanitarian crises drove humanitarian needs to critical levels. Conflict, natural disasters and climate change forced children from their homes, trapped many in dangerous situations and exposed them to violence,

[1] Miroslav Lajčák, "Achieving universal access to water and sanitation", *UN Chronicle*, vol. LV, No. 1 (March 2018).

exploitation, deprivation, malnutrition and disease. By the end of the year, approximately 350 million children[2] were living in areas affected by conflict and lacked access to adequate medical care, quality education, proper nutrition and protection. According to the annual report for 2017 of the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), over the past 10 years, the number of children living in conflict zones has increased by 74 per cent.[3] Protracted crises persist with no signs of abating. These complex crises have resulted in mass displacement, with an estimated 65 million people[4] around the globe forced to flee their homes. The protracted conflicts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, Yemen and the Lake Chad Basin continued to deepen in complexity in 2017, bringing new waves of violence, displacement and disruption to children's lives.

II. Follow-up to the General Assembly special session on children

A. Planning for children

6. The adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals renewed international commitments to create a more peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world for children and future generations. Investing in children's issues and voices must continue to be at the centre of Sustainable Development Goal implementation, follow-up and review efforts at all levels.

7. Leaving no child behind in the context of the 2030 Agenda requires accurately assessing and addressing the challenges facing millions of children. Approximately half a billion (520 million) children are effectively uncounted, living in countries that have insufficient data to assess whether they are on track for at least two thirds of the global targets. An additional half a billion (533 million) children live in countries where the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals remains out of reach, as their current trajectory will leave them short of at least two thirds of the targets on which they can be assessed.[5] Various countries are devoting resources to localize the global monitoring framework to national contexts, identify data gaps and utilize existing reports to implement responsive policymaking at both the national and subnational levels. These efforts must become widespread practices for the issues of children to properly be reflected and addressed by 2030. To support adequate data collection, disaggregation, analysis and use, it will be critical to improve national capacities and innovations in technology, including participatory methods that enable all people to provide direct feedback.

8. Improving child and youth participation is a core strategy for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and is further gaining traction at the national and local levels. The 2030 Agenda formally recognized children and adolescents not only as beneficiaries, but also as key agents of change for sustainable development. Governments, civil society and United Nations entities have employed various joint endeavours to this end. Since the agenda's adoption, 65 countries have presented a voluntary national review on the Sustainable Development Goals, and approximately

[2] Save the Children International, *The War on Children: Time to End Grave Violations against Children in Conflict* (London, 2018).

[3] E/ICEF/2018/9.

[4] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Figures at a glance" (2017); available at www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html.

[5] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Progress for every child in the SDG era", 2018.

60 per cent of those reports explicitly mention consultations with children and youth informing the national follow-up and review process. Governments are increasingly establishing channels for children and youth to learn about sustainable development, contribute to development plans and actions and hold decision makers and implementers to account on universal commitments.

B. Promoting the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

9. As at 22 June 2018, 196 States parties had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2017, the Central African Republic ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the State of Palestine ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, bringing the total number of ratifications for those optional protocols to 167 and 174, respectively. Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, and eight States ratified it,[6] bringing the total number of States parties to 37 by the end of 2017. UNICEF also continued to provide technical support to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which oversees the implementation of the Convention, and which adopted two general comments.[7] The first, general comment No. 21 (2017) on children in street situations, makes recommendations on the development of holistic, long-term strategies to address both prevention and response. The Committee also collaborated with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, leading to the adoption of joint general comments on the human rights of children in the context of international migration. These address the particular vulnerabilities children face and promote the development and implementation of comprehensive, rights-based migration policies in countries of origin, transit, destination and return in international migration.[8]

10. There has been considerable progress on advancing gender equality to realize the rights of all children in the past two decades. Efforts to address gender-related barriers in education, health, access to resources and protection from violence have contributed to a more level playing field for women and girls and have led to improved outcomes for children. The number of girls attending and completing primary and lower secondary school is increasing steadily. In the past 10 years, the percentage of women married as children decreased globally by 15 per cent, from 1 in 4 to 1 in 5,[9] while the percentage of girls 15 to 19 years of age who have undergone female genital mutilation and cutting fell from 41 per cent to 37 per cent in 30 countries with representative data on prevalence.[10] Even so, the gender inequalities that inhibit girls' chances of surviving and thriving remain alarming, robbing the poorest and most excluded girls in particular from the rights and protections they are owed.

[6] Brazil, Croatia, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Panama, Paraguay, Switzerland and Turkey.

[7] General comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child are authoritative interpretations of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

[8] General comments Nos. 22 and 23, available at: www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx.

[9] UNICEF, "Child marriage is a violation of human rights, but is all too common" (2018), available from https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage.

[10] UNICEF, "Female genital mutilation/cutting: a global concern", available from https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/FGMC-2016-brochure_250.pdf.

11. Positive global trends can mask regional disparities. Girls' risk of dying before five years of age is higher in countries in South Asia and the Middle East,[11] and challenges to girls' secondary school participation are highest in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.[12] Girls continue to face an intensification of deprivations as they become adolescents, with puberty signalling more restrictions in their movements and social networks and gender norms dictating circumscribed expectations around marriage, family responsibilities and economic livelihoods. Adolescent pregnancy remains one of the gravest health-related issues facing girls. A total of 16 million girls from 15 to 19 years of age and 1 million girls under 15 years of age give birth annually, disproportionately in low- and middle-income countries.[13] Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are still, globally, the leading cause of death for girls of 15 to 19 years of age.[14] In humanitarian settings, adolescent girls face heightened disadvantages in accessing education and health-related services, including menstrual hygiene management, and an increased risk of gender-based violence and exploitation.

12. Rates of child marriage are beginning to decline at a faster pace, including in some countries with large numbers of girls at risk, where national actors, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other partners have built momentum in the past 10 years. In Ethiopia, prevalence has dropped by one third, and in India, it has fallen from 50 per cent to 30 per cent.[15] One successful strategy has been to increase girls' opportunities to acquire education and life skills and access health services. This serves as a preventative measure against child marriage and helps to mitigate the negative consequences for girls already married as children. In the period from 2016 to 2017, more than 2 million adolescent girls at risk of child marriage received life skills and school attendance support in the form of cash transfers, school materials and the payment of transport expenses. Prioritizing more gender-responsive water, sanitation and hygiene interventions has led to improved outcomes for adolescent girls in terms of their access to and completion of education and has promoted change in community attitudes that stigmatize puberty and menstruation.

C. Collaborating with partners and leveraging resources for children

13. In 2017, resources for children decreased slightly, with the net official development assistance (ODA) flows from member countries of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development at $146.6 billion, representing a slight decrease of 0.6 per cent from 2016, after adjusting for exchange rates and inflation.[16] The decrease reflects the decline of the refugee crisis. Excluding the costs of hosting refugees inside donor countries, ODA increased by 1.1 per cent in real terms compared with the figures for 2016, and has doubled since 2000. In 2017, the total net ODA for all Development Assistance Committee members averaged 0.31 per cent of gross national income, falling slightly compared with 0.32 per cent in 2016. Despite this decrease, country-to-country aid to the least developed countries increased by 4 per cent in real terms

[11] UNICEF, "Is every child counted? Status of data for children in the SDGs" (2017), available from https://data.unicef.org/resources/every-child-counted-status-data-children-sdgs/.

[12] UNICEF, "Secondary education: current status and progress" (2018), available at: https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/secondary-education.

[13] World Health Organization, "Adolescent Pregnancy fact sheet", available at: www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs364/en/.

[14] Ibid.

[15] See footnote 9.

[16] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Detailed aid statistics: official and private flows", available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00072-en.

from 2016, thus reversing the declining trend noted in previous years. Aid to Africa also increased by 3 per cent. Humanitarian aid was $15.5 billion in 2017, rising by 6.1 per cent in real terms compared with 2016.

14. Multiple partnerships were built and strengthened in 2017 to leverage resources for children. For example, through the UNICEF-World Bank partnership to provide essential health and nutrition services and social protection through emergency cash transfers to the most vulnerable conflict-affected populations in Yemen, 4.8 million children were vaccinated against polio, 2.58 million children were screened for malnutrition and 1.3 million families received emergency cash transfers, reaching 8.66 million people. UNICEF also co-organized a high-level forum on universal health coverage with the Government of Japan, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the World Bank Group and the World Health Organization (WHO), to enhance political support for affordable quality health coverage for all by 2030, with a focus on equity. The Secretary-General acts as senior co-chair of the Every Woman Every Child high-level steering group, to provide continued leadership to mobilize multi-stakeholder investments in the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

D. Monitoring progress

15. When Heads of State assembled for the World Summit for Children in 1990, they had very limited information upon which to base targets to promote the survival, protection and development of children. Since then, there has been a revolution in the collection and use of quality and disaggregated data.

16. Much of this improvement is due to the expansion of global household survey programmes, including the Demographic and Health Survey, the Living Standards Measurement Study, and the multiple indictor cluster survey (MICS) programme. As the leading survey-based household data source on children, adolescents and women, the MICS programme has continuously evolved since its inception in 1995, innovating and aligning itself with changing priorities and emerging areas of concern. More than 300 MICS had been completed in 109 countries as of the beginning of the sixth round of surveys, in 2017. The sixth round is now generating data on 33 Sustainable Development Goal indicators, which represent more than half of the indicators that can be generated through household surveys. More than 60 MICS surveys are expected to be completed between 2018 and 2020, producing comparable data for the first time on such key areas as foundational learning skills, quality of drinking water, impact of emergencies and child functioning. Nevertheless, major monitoring challenges remain, such as significant gaps in data coverage, especially in conflict-affected States in which existing methods of collecting data are challenging to carry out, as well as additional constraints involving coordination among agencies, finance and capacity.

17. Systems for real-time information collection and engagement continue to be scaled up. By April 2018, U-Report, the UNICEF social messaging platform, had 5 million users in 42 countries. It was used to monitor cash transfers following the 2017 floods in Sierra Leone and has been regularly used by Governments and partners to facilitate real-time information flows between young people. More than 200 partners from civil society, the private sector and Governments are involved worldwide. The RapidPro mobile platform, which operates in 41 countries, continues to help to reduce maternal and childhood mortality. To support the Government of Indonesia in its largest-ever immunization campaign, aimed at vaccinating 70 million children against measles and rubella in two years, RapidPro was integrated to enable real-time coverage analysis at the community health centre level.

E. Participation and self-expression of children

18. Supporting the participation of children in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and policies is an essential component of the 2030 Agenda. Children's right to be heard and respected in matters that concern them are reflected in several provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 stipulates that States parties are obliged to assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, with the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. With this article, together with articles 5 and 13 through 17, the Convention conveys the idea that children should be active participants in their own development, rather than mere recipients of adult protective care.

19. Two critical normative milestones for child participation were reached with the publication by the Committee on the Rights of the Child of general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard and general comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence. The documents reiterate the centrality of the right to participation to ensure that children and adolescents are prepared to lead responsible lives in their societies. They emphasize the importance of participation as a means of civic engagement through which adolescents can negotiate and advocate for the realization of their rights.

20. The lack of an agreed framework against which to measure meaningful child participation has been a major stumbling block for evidence-based programming. In 2017, UNICEF, together with partners, led the development of a conceptual framework for measuring the outcomes of adolescent participation. The framework will inform the identification of appropriate indicators and the development of survey tools to measure and monitor progress in promoting child participation.

III. Progress in the four major goal areas of "A world fit for children"

A. Promoting healthy lives

21. The world has made substantial progress in reducing child mortality in the past several decades. The total number of deaths in children under five year of age dropped to 5.6 million in 2016 from 12.6 million in 1990 — 15,000 on a daily basis in 2016 compared with 35,000 on a daily basis in 1990. Globally, the mortality rate for children under five years of age dropped to 41 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016, down from 93 in 1990, which represents a 56 per cent decline.[17] Children face the highest risk of dying in their first month of life — a rate of 19 deaths per 1,000 live births — resulting in 2.6 million newborn deaths and an equal number of stillbirths worldwide. The majority of these deaths are preventable.

22. From 1990 to 2015, the global maternal mortality ratio declined by 44 per cent, from 385 deaths per 100,000 live births to 216 per 100,000. Ensuring that women give birth with skilled attendants is an important factor for protecting the lives of both mother and infant. There has been improvement in this area: while only 31 per cent of live births occurred with skilled birth assistance in 2000, coverage expanded to 56 per cent by 2016. Even so, 303,000 women died in childbirth in 2016. Developing regions account for approximately 99 per cent of global maternal deaths, with

[17] Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, "Levels and Trends in Child Mortality: report 2017".

sub-Saharan Africa alone accounting for roughly 66 per cent. A total of 26 countries, most of them in West and Central Africa, will need to accelerate progress to achieve universal coverage of skilled birth attendance. Women and adolescent girls face additional risks in humanitarian contexts due to the deterioration of health services and weakened social protection systems.

23. Disparities in child survival exist across regions and countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 1 of every 13 children dies before his or her fifth birthday, while in the world's high-income countries the ratio is 1 in 189. Among newborns in sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 1 in every 36 children dies in the first month, while in the world's high-income countries the ratio is 1 in 333. If current trends continue, with more than 50 countries falling short of the Sustainable Development Goal target on child survival, some 60 million children under five years of age will die between 2017 and 2030, half of them newborns. Infectious diseases and neonatal complications are responsible for the vast majority of deaths of children under the age of five globally. The statistics are all the more appalling because the diseases that kill the greatest number of children are largely preventable and treatable with proven, cost-effective interventions. Global emergencies are increasingly stretching health systems and exacerbating inequities in health outcomes.

24. United Nations entities continued to support the scaling up of high-impact health interventions in 2017. The H6 (formerly H4+) partnership brings together the collective strengths and distinct capacities of United Nations agencies — UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women as well as the World Bank — in reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health. A 2016 evaluation[18] of a joint programme implemented by the H4+ partners concluded that the programme contributed to strengthening health systems along the continuum of care and expanded access to quality services in underserved and hard-to-reach areas by consistently targeting the populations most in need (youth, the poorest women and individuals living with HIV/AIDS). The H4+ partners demonstrated their capacity to adjust to new priorities and challenges, such as the Ebola virus outbreak.

25. Immunization prevents an estimated 2 to 3 million deaths every year from diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and measles, which can also cause disabilities. However, an additional 1.5 million deaths could be avoided if global vaccination coverage were to improve. During 2016, approximately 86 per cent of infants worldwide (116.5 million infants) received three doses of diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis (DTP3) vaccine. By 2016, 130 countries had reached at least 90 per cent coverage of DTP3 vaccine. However, an estimated 19.5 million infants worldwide, 60 per cent of them living in only 10 countries, were not reached with routine immunization services, such as vaccination with DTP3. Monitoring data at the subnational level is critical to helping countries to prioritize and tailor vaccination strategies and operational plans to address immunization gaps and reach every person with life-saving vaccines.[19]

26. By the end of 2017, the global number of wild poliovirus cases fell to just 22, occurring in two countries (Afghanistan and Pakistan), compared with 37 cases in three countries in 2016 and 416 cases in eight countries in 2013. No new cases of wild poliovirus have been reported in Africa.

[18] United Nations Population Fund, "Evaluation of the H4+ Joint Programme Canada and Sweden (2011–2016)", available at: www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/evaluation-h4-joint-programme-canada-and-sweden-2011-2016.

[19] World Health Organization (WHO), "Global immunization coverage 2016" fact sheet (April 2018), available at www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/immunization-coverage.

27. Well-nourished children are healthier, more resistant to disease and more likely to survive. As they grow, they are more able to learn, becoming more productive and better equipped to participate in and contribute to their communities. Malnutrition in all its forms remains a persistent challenge. The estimated number of stunted children globally has declined, from 170 million in 2010 to 151 million in 2017. More than one third of those stunted children live in Africa, where their number has increased, and more than half live in Asia.

28. In 2017, nearly 51 million children under five years of age suffered from wasting, and more than 16 million suffered from severe wasting, many of them in Africa and Asia. While wasting is often associated with emergencies, its burden remains high in many stable contexts. At the other end of the spectrum, 38 million children under five years of age were overweight in 2017, up from 30 million in 2000.

29. Globally, millions of children continue to suffer from vitamin and mineral deficiencies, which can lead to poor growth, delayed cognitive development, weakened immunity, disability, disease and even death. An estimated 29 per cent of children of 6 to 59 months of age suffer from vitamin A deficiency in low- and middle-income settings. Forty-three per cent of preschool-age children and 33 per cent of women of reproductive age suffer from anaemia, which is often due to iron deficiency.

30. Improving nutrition is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and nutrition is embedded in Goal 2. In order to address the multiple nutrition challenges, which tend to affect the most disadvantaged, the global nutrition community strives to create a more supportive and enabling environment for the scale-up of nutrition programmes. By the end of 2017, 60 countries had joined the Scaling Up Nutrition movement, which supports multisectoral and coordinated actions to scale up evidence-based, costed nutrition plans. Of the 60 countries, 50 had national multi-stakeholder platforms in place.

31. Breastfeeding is not only an investment in improving the health of children and mothers, it is also an investment in human capital development that can benefit a country's economy. On average, every dollar invested in breastfeeding programmes generates $35 in economic returns. Recent analysis shows that in China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and Nigeria alone, inadequate breastfeeding is responsible for more than 236,000 child deaths each year. Globally, only 40 per cent of infants under six months of age were exclusively breastfed in 2017.

32. In low- and middle-income countries, approximately half of children of 6 to 23 months of age receive foods with adequate frequency and only 30 per cent are meeting the minimum requirement for dietary diversity. It is worrisome that only 17 per cent of children receive a minimum acceptable diet, which refers to meeting the minimums both of meals and diet diversity.

33. Iodine deficiency is a common cause of preventable cognitive impairment. Over the last two decades, global efforts and initiatives to control iodine deficiency disorders have yielded remarkable results. Currently, 86 per cent of the world's population is consuming iodized salt. Improvement in salt iodization programmes has led to a reduction in the number of countries with iodine deficiency in the general population — from 100 in 1990 to only 20 today.

34. For women of childbearing age, fortifying such commonly consumed cereal grains as wheat flour, maize flour and rice is an important means of preventing birth defects and anaemia. As of the end of 2017, 87 countries had legislation to mandate the fortification of at least one industrially milled cereal grain.[20] For young children,

[20] Food Fortification Initiative, "Mandatory cereal grain fortification legislation - March 2018" global map, available at www.ffinetwork.org/global_progress.

home fortification using micronutrient powders is a more targeted approach currently taking place in at least 62 countries worldwide.

35. In 2015, at the end of the Millennium Development Goal period, 6.6 billion people were using improved drinking water sources. The usage rate was 96 per cent in urban areas, but only 84 per cent in rural areas. In 2015, 4.9 billion people were using improved sanitation facilities. The usage rate was 82 per cent in urban areas but only 51 per cent in rural areas. Approximately 2,000 children die each day from diarrhoeal disease owing to a lack of access to safe drinking water, sanitation and basic hygiene.[21]

36. The targets associated with Sustainable Development Goal 6 for universal access to drinking water and for sanitation and hygiene place emphasis on accessibility, sustainability and quality and are therefore ambitious, given the challenges to resource mobilization and the conditions prevailing in many countries. It is estimated that 2.1 billion people lack safely managed drinking water services and 4.5 billion people lack safely managed sanitation services.[22] The sustainable provision of water and sanitation services will require transformational change in structural and institutional factors and the strengthening of sector governance functions at the national and subnational levels.

37. Ending open defecation, which was still practiced by 892 million people in 2015, and achieving universal access to basic water, sanitation and hygiene by 2030 will require a substantial acceleration in progress, particularly in rural areas. In 2016, it was estimated that girls and women collectively spend 97 billion hours annually securing a safe place to defecate. Fetching water is another challenge, especially for children and women, who globally spend a cumulative 73 billion hours annually fetching water. While hygiene behaviours have improved, the percentage of people with hand-washing facilities consisting of soap and water at home must be increased.

38. With respect to early childhood development, the shift from advocacy to policy and programme implementation that was forecast in 2016 started to occur in 2017. That year saw an emerging global architecture for early childhood development, notably in the form of the Early Childhood Development Action Network, which is aimed at assembling and coordinating the financial and technical resources of partners to accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goal targets related to young children. Globally, 49 countries, including those in humanitarian contexts, are implementing care for child development, an intervention that targets the first 1,000 days of life, a critical period for children's development. Care for child development is added to existing health, nutrition and protection services to provide parents with stimulation and responsive care counselling. For children from 3 to 6 years of age, while the focus has been primarily on expanding access to early learning — and 102 countries have such programmes — several countries have been emphasizing the importance of the quality of the early learning environment.

39. Despite the global shift in early childhood development, there is still a dire need for change for young children. A child's environment greatly influences his or her physical and cognitive development. Without good quality nutrition, health care, social services, stimulation and early learning, children may not develop to their full potential. In predominantly low- and middle-income countries, approximately 80 per cent of children from 2 to 4 years of age are violently disciplined regularly. There are approximately 15.5 million children from 3 to 4 years of age who do not receive stimulation from adults through reading, telling stories, counting, naming things or

[21] Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, "Levels and Trends in Child Mortality: report 2015", available at: www.unicef.org/media/files/IGME_Report_Final2.pdf.

[22] WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme, "Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2017 update and SDG baselines", 2017.

drawing. Around the world, approximately 300 million children live in areas in which the air is toxic, hampering their brain development.[23]

40. In 2017 the Group of 20 announced the prioritization of early childhood development in its development agenda, which has and will continue to serve as a platform to increase the political visibility of and commitment to early childhood development. There is now a need to consolidate gains and find ways to include the private sector to effectively scale up early childhood development and give every child the opportunity to develop to his or her full potential.

B. Providing quality education

41. Education is a right enshrined in articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is also a driver of equity, poverty reduction, empowerment, peaceful and inclusive societies and economic growth. Educating girls is particularly transformative. Evidence shows that the completion of secondary education brings about dramatic increases in lifetime earnings and equally dramatic decreases in birth rates and child and maternal mortality rates. Under the Sustainable Development Goals, almost all Governments have committed to doing more than filling classrooms. They have agreed to work towards providing all children with an education that is gender-responsive and equips them with essential knowledge and skills. And they have agreed to provide it for children regardless of who they are, what abilities they have, where they live or how wealthy their families are.

42. Sustainable Development Goal 4, concerning education, call for the international community to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. It embodies a commitment to equity for all children, holds high expectations for learning and embraces ambitious targets for universal primary education and increased access to pre-primary and secondary education. The global education community continues to address the unfinished business of providing quality primary education to all children, while also building capacity for progress towards universal access to pre-primary and secondary education, particularly for the most marginalized children.

43. On average, the world has achieved gender parity in primary enrolment and completion. However, gender parity alone does not fully address gender inequality.[24] Only 66 per cent of countries have achieved gender parity in primary education, 45 per cent have achieved it in lower secondary education and 25 per cent have done so in upper secondary education. Girls and boys face different challenges. When girls are encouraged to complete primary education, to transition to lower secondary school and to delay marriage and motherhood, they are less likely to drop out. When adolescent boys experience gender norms that make masculinity incompatible with engagement in school, they are more likely to drop out. In 2017, less than 5 per cent of primary school-aged girls were out of school in 40 per cent of countries, up from 36 per cent of countries in 2014. But for boys, that was true in only 34 per cent of countries, a decrease from 41 per cent in 2014. Similarly, less than 5 per cent of lower secondary school-aged girls were out of school in 27 countries in 2017, up from 21 per cent of countries in 2014, while for boys, the rate fell to 21 per cent from 22 per cent in 2014. In 2017, 79 per cent of children from the poorest quintile households attended primary school, up from 72 per cent in 2013.

[23] United Nations Children's Fund, "Early moments matter for every child", New York, 2017.

[24] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Global Education Monitoring Report Gender Review: meeting our commitments to gender quality in education", Paris, 2018.

44. There are 160 million more children and adolescents enrolled in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools around the world than there were just 10 years ago, which is a tribute to the efforts of country leadership and the support of the international community. By 2017, almost all countries had passed laws requiring school attendance at the primary level, and fee-free public primary schooling was enshrined in law in 135 countries.[25] There has been continued progress in expanding the number of years of free and compulsory education, with 64 per cent of countries now guaranteeing at least 9 years of free and compulsory education in legal frameworks.

45. Nevertheless, much remains to be done. More than one third of primary school-aged children are failing to learn basic literacy and numeracy. The Sustainable Development Goals aim for inclusive, quality education for all, but just 1 in 10 young people in low-income countries are on track to gain the secondary-level skills necessary for success in the global economy by 2030. As many as 250 million children are not achieving basic literacy and numeracy. More than 124 million children of primary and lower secondary school age worldwide are out of school. That number increases to an estimated 263 million when upper secondary school aged children are included. In sub-Saharan Africa, the school-age population in 2030 is projected to be more than double the number of children currently enrolled. In 35 countries affected by emergencies and protracted crises, 75 million children need educational support. Unless improvements occur rapidly, there will still be approximately 1.5 billion adults in 2030 who have had no more than a primary school education. They will almost all come from families whose parents had little education, and their children will be at high risk of perpetuating the cycle.

46. Children with disabilities are among the most marginalized groups in terms of access to education. Estimates suggest that in developing countries, almost half of all children with disabilities are out of school, 42 per cent at the primary level and 56 per cent at the lower secondary level.[26] According to evidence compiled by the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), persons with disabilities are more likely to be out of school, less likely to complete primary or secondary education and less likely to possess basic literacy skills.

47. Evidence clearly demonstrates that quality early childhood education sets in motion a positive cycle of learning that continues well beyond children's early years, with wide-reaching benefits beyond education. Economists estimate that for every dollar invested in preschool programmes, the rate of return is between 7 and 10 per cent per year.[27] Yet equity in the provision and quality of early childhood education remains a major challenge. Children from wealthy families were eight times more likely to attend early learning programmes than children from the poorest households. Pre-primary education may be the subsector with the largest gap between evidence and practice, and is the blind spot in both domestic and international education financing. There is a need to accelerate support to Governments in this area and to adopt a sector-wide perspective that mainstreams pre-primary education into sector planning and implementation processes, ensuring adequate financing for the expansion of quality services.

[25] UNESCO, "2015 Education for All Global Monitoring Report: 2000–2015", Paris, 2015.

[26] Suguru Mizunoya, Sophie Mitra and Izumi Yamasaki, "Towards inclusive education: the impact of disability on school attendance in developing countries", Innocenti Working Paper No. 2016-03, pp. 24-25 (Florence, Italy, UNICEF Office of Research, May 2016).

[27] James J. Heckman et. al., "The rate of return to the HighScope Perry Preschool Program", *Journal of Public Economics*, vol. 94, issues 1-2, (2009) pp. 114-128.

48. Statistics mask deep inequities within countries that are driven by poverty, location, disability, gender and ethnicity. At the heart of all good education systems lies a profound respect for individual differences. It is these differences that lead to the development of creativity, invention, problem-solving and other transferable skills. The Out-of-School Children Initiative, a partnership between UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics launched in 2012, has increased the data and evidence around out-of-school children in more than 90 countries to date, supporting informed decisions to address barriers for these children.

49. Around the world, more children than ever before are going to school and staying in school. Yet far too many of those children are still not getting what they came to school for and what their parents are counting on schools to deliver: the knowledge and skills necessary for lifelong success. Differences in learning outcomes are gendered, limiting the opportunities for girls and boys to develop foundational knowledge in mathematics and reading, respectively. Governments have signalled their commitment through the Sustainable Development Goals to turn things around for these children, to provide them with an education that opens up lifelong opportunities, especially for the most marginalized children and adolescents.

50. Sustainable Development Goal 4 will not be reached worldwide without increased investment in education and action in humanitarian contexts. In 2017, 8.8 million children in humanitarian situations (4.3 million girls, 4.5 million boys) were reached with formal or non-formal education, including 1.02 million children in the Syrian Arab Republic, more than 904,000 in Nigeria and more than 370,000 in Yemen. Education sector plans included risk assessment and management in 40 per cent of countries, up from 19 per cent in 2013.

51. Education systems that provide real opportunities to all children and youth are not the product of chance. They are the result of a relentless focus on equity and a devotion to quality. Strong education systems can be measured by the success rates of the most marginalized and vulnerable populations they serve. They are built upon clear and consistent accountability relationships among stakeholders at different levels. They also ensure that learning is paramount, that performance is monitored and that data are transparent and accessible, enabling key decision makers to make evidence-based decisions.

C. Protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence

52. Significant progress in the area of child protection has been achieved. Overall, 71 per cent of children under five years of age were registered in 2017.[28] In 2017, UNICEF supported the registration of almost 16 million births across 80 countries, representing substantial progress compared to the more than 12.3 million registered in 70 countries in 2016.[29]

53. In 2017, more than 90 countries implemented coordinated national action plans and policies to address violence against children, including actions to prevent and respond to sexual abuse and exploitation. The number of States implementing actions to prevent and respond to online child sexual exploitation almost tripled over the past two years, rising from 17 countries in 2016 to 47 in 2017. Over the course of 2017, the total number of States prohibiting corporal punishment, including in the home, rose to 53, with a further 56 States committed to achieving a complete legal ban. By

[28] UNICEF, birth registration data, November 2017, available at: https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/birth-registration.

[29] A/72/208.

the end of 2017, 84 countries had established legal and policy frameworks to prevent violence in educational settings.

54. The UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage and the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation, the two largest joint/global United Nations programmes, continue to demonstrate how the United Nations system can effectively work collaboratively to achieve results in line with the Secretary-General's reform agenda. In 2017, nearly 870,000 girls and women at risk of or affected by female genital mutilation benefited from health, education, welfare and legal services. Significant progress was made on the enforcement side of combatting female genital mutilation, with approximately 325 arrests, 260 court cases and 106 convictions in seven countries in 2017,[30] representing a major increase compared with only 71 arrests in 2016. The adoption of a resolution by the Human Rights Council to end child marriage in humanitarian settings marked an important global child rights achievement in 2017.[31] Even as the percentage of women married as children decreases, approximately 650 million girls and women alive today were married as children. In 2017, hundreds of millions of children experienced some form of harmful practice, violence or exploitation.

55. During 2017, approximately 3.6 million girls and women in 59 countries benefited from gender-based violence risk mitigation and support services, while approximately 3.5 million children received psychosocial support across 65 humanitarian situations, including through the provision of child-friendly spaces and community- and school-based interventions. Weapons-related risk education was also provided to almost 5.9 million children in more than 20 countries.[32]

56. The efforts of the United Nations to strengthen the global framework to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation are increasing, with 72 Member States party to or in the process of becoming party to (and an additional 19 indicating an intention to become party to) a bilateral voluntary compact embodying key commitments to protect children from sexual exploitation.

57. The scale-up of action and investments to strengthen child protection systems, and in particular the role of the social service workforce, was prioritized in 2017. By the end of 2017, 142 countries reported strengthened national child protection systems, at least 50 countries reported child protection systems offering preventive and response services, and at least 48 countries reported legislation on child protection consistent with or better than international standards. A total of 70 countries increased the capacity of their national justice systems to serve children appearing in criminal and civil proceedings.

D. Combating HIV and AIDS

58. The scale-up of the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV is one of the greatest public health achievements of recent times, averting 2 million new infections among children under 15 years of age since 2000. Most pregnant women are tested for HIV, and those who are found to be HIV-positive are immediately initiated on antiretroviral therapy to keep them alive and well and to stop them from transmitting the virus to their babies. In 2017, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands and Montserrat were certified by WHO as having

[30] Burkina Faso, Egypt, Eritrea, the Gambia, Guinea, Kenya and Uganda.

[31] Human Rights Council resolution 35/16.

[32] Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Burundi, Cameroon, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen, as well as the State of Palestine.

eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Globally, there were 160,000 new infections in children from 0 to 14 years of age in 2016, a 47 per cent reduction since 2010 and an 8 per cent reduction since 2015. Moving forward, and to super-fast-track the end of AIDS among children, the new UNAIDS "three frees" Framework proposes reductions in the number of new child HIV infections globally to less than 40,000 by 2018 and less than 20,000 by 2020. The framework also proposes reaching and sustaining 95 per cent of pregnant women living with HIV with lifelong antiretroviral therapy by 2018.

59. There is slower progress in access to life-saving antiretroviral therapy for children under the age of 15 years. In 2016, globally, 54 per cent of adults living with HIV received antiretroviral therapy, compared with only 43 per cent of children, a slight increase from 38 per cent in 2015. Latin America and the Caribbean had the highest percentage of children on antiretroviral therapy (53 per cent) in 2016, followed by East and Southern Africa (51 per cent) and East Asia and the Pacific (47 per cent). Key bottlenecks include limited access to HIV testing for infants and the inadequate expansion of paediatric treatment access points.

60. Globally, progress in preventing new HIV infections has been slow among adolescents, specifically adolescent girls, and young women. The number of new HIV infections among adolescents from 15 to 19 years of age in 2016 was only 14 per cent lower than in 2010 and 17 per cent lower than in 2005, compared with 47 per cent and 63 per cent declines in children younger than five years of age during the same time periods. Of the 1.7 million new infections reported in adults over 15 years of age, 610,000 (36 per cent) occurred among those from 15 to 24 years of age (260,000 in those 15 to 19 years of age and 350,000 in those 20 to 24 years of age). Adolescent girls and young women accounted for 360,000 of the new infections in adults, with adolescent girls accounting for 67 per cent of new infections among those from 15 to 19 years of age.

61. In 2016, there were still more than 17 million children who had lost one or both parents to AIDS. However, remarkable gains have been made in mitigating the economic and social impact of HIV and AIDS on children and families over the past decade. Evaluations of national social protection programmes have documented that social protection, in particular cash transfers, can contribute to improving access to health, education and nutrition, strengthening social networks, increasing access to HIV and AIDS treatment and prevention and reducing adolescent vulnerability and risk-taking.

62. The current state of the HIV response calls for innovative solutions. For example, early adopters of point-of-care HIV diagnostic technologies in East and Southern Africa have demonstrated that, compared with conventional laboratories, point-of-care platforms can reduce the turnaround time for results, substantially increase antiretroviral therapy initiation rates in children and reduce patient loss during follow-up. Infant same-day HIV results in the pilot point-of-care studies have demonstrated improved and early linkage to treatment, thereby avoiding the early peak mortality associated with HIV at 2 to 3 months of age in HIV-infected infants. Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, early adopters of point-of-care HIV diagnostic technologies, are also piloting the integration of HIV and tuberculosis testing, using point-of-care platforms capable of multiplexing.

IV. Ways forward

63. During the period from 2002 to 2017, millions of children born around the world started their lives with a better chance than ever of living healthily and achieving their potential. Nevertheless poverty, discrimination, disaster, violence and conflict robbed

millions of others of the chance to enjoy those same rights. In spite of improvements in child survival, pockets of extreme poverty persisted even in wealthy countries, and children represent a disproportionate number of the poor. Humanitarian emergencies, fragility, instability and displacement continue to threaten children's rights.

64. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and other major global agreements presents a unique opportunity to take stock and review ways in which the commitments of "A world fit for children" are being fulfilled. The year 2019 is a particularly critical one: it is a year of stock-taking on the Sustainable Development Goals, with the high-level political form on sustainable development convening for the first time under the auspices of both the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The year 2019 is also the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The world has a new commitment, and increasingly the knowledge and means, to overcome critical obstacles that prevent children from realizing their potential and their rights. Without ambitious action on sustainable development, humanitarian assistance and climate change, the promise of progress brought about by new agreements risks becoming a tragedy for the world's youngest citizens. To reach the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, we must ensure that no child is left behind.

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Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly

Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

During the reporting period, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa held two ministerial meetings. The forty-fifth meeting was held in Kigali from 4 to 8 December 2017, and the forty-sixth meeting was held in Brazzaville from 29 May to 1 June 2018. Both meetings were facilitated by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, in its capacity as secretariat of the Committee.

At the two meetings, the Committee reviewed the political and security situation in Central Africa and recommended actions to be taken to address the prevailing security challenges on the agenda of the Committee. During both meetings, the Committee examined the status of the signature and ratification of legal instruments on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons in the subregion, in particular the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly (Kinshasa Convention) and the Arms Trade Treaty. While progress had been made since the forty-fourth meeting, the Committee urged those of its member States that had not yet done so to ratify or accede to both instruments. The secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) informed the Committee that its action plan for the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention was in line with the African Union master road map, entitled "Silencing the Guns by 2020".

The Committee demonstrated increased attention to the women and peace and security agenda, in particular with regard to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the participation of women in decision-making. At both meetings, the Committee urged its member States to increase the representation of

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women in delegations attending the its biannual meetings, in accordance with the declaration adopted in Sao Tome at the forty-third meeting.

During its forty-fifth meeting, which saw renewed high-level participation, with 10 countries represented at the ministerial level, the Committee dedicated its first closed-door ministerial session to the situation in the Central African Republic and the reform of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa. The Committee adopted two declarations, one on each issue (see annexes I and II). It also adopted a communiqué prepared by representatives of youth organizations (see annex III) from ECCAS member countries. During its forty-sixth meeting, the Committee dedicated a ministerial closed-door session to discussing confidence measures in the subregion and adopted a declaration on the issue (see annex IV).

The Committee assessed the progress achieved in the adoption of the regional strategy and plan of action for combating terrorism and the trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa. During the forty-fifth meeting, the ECCAS secretariat decided, for operational reasons, to remove issues related to small arms and light weapons from the strategy, which was subsequently endorsed at the ministerial meeting of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, held in Libreville in March 2018. However, at the forty-sixth meeting, the Committee recommended that the strategy be implemented in its original form, including issues relating to small arms and light weapons, as previously adopted at its forty-first meeting, held in Libreville in November 2015. It also recommended that the relevant peace and security organs of ECCAS finalize the endorsement of the strategy so as to enable the ECCAS secretariat to follow up on its implementation, which remains the responsibility of member States.

The threat posed by Boko Haram, and the measures being taken at both the subregional and regional levels to counter the terrorist group, in particular the operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force and the long-planned joint summit of the Heads of State and Government of ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States, remained high on the agenda of the Committee. The Bureau of the Committee expressed its willingness to undertake a field visit to Boko Haram-affected areas before its forty-seventh meeting.

The forty-seventh meeting is scheduled to be held in N'Djamena before the end of 2018.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 72/63, entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa", the General Assembly welcomed the efforts of the Committee towards addressing cross-border security threats in Central Africa. The Assembly also reaffirmed its support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels to ease tensions and conflicts in Central Africa and to further sustainable peace, stability and development in the subregion.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly expressed its satisfaction to the Secretary-General for his support to the Committee, expressed appreciation for the role played by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in its capacity as the secretariat of the Committee, and strongly encouraged the States members of the Committee and its regional and international partners to support the work of the Office. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the assistance needed by the Committee to ensure the success of its regular biannual meetings. It also called upon him to submit to the General Assembly, at its seventy-third session, a report on the implementation of resolution 72/63.

3. The present report is submitted pursuant to the above request and covers the activities carried out by the Committee from September 2017 to August 2018.

II. Activities of the Committee

4. The forty-fifth ministerial meeting of the Committee was held in Kigali, from 4 to 8 December 2017, and the forty-sixth meeting was held in Brazzaville, from 29 May to 1 June 2018. Both meetings were attended by Angola, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe. Burundi was unable to attend the forty-fifth meeting, but did attend the forty-sixth. The secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which plays an active role throughout the meetings alongside UNOCA, participated in both meetings.

5. Representatives of the following entities also participated as observers in one or both meetings: the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Multinational Joint Task Force, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. Representatives of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) attended both the forty-fifth and the forty-sixth meetings. During the forty-sixth meeting, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, at the initiative of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA, jointly briefed the Committee, for the first time, on their respective areas of responsibility and shared messages related to the implementation of their mandates. They also briefed the Committee on the main

conclusions of the sixth annual meeting of United Nations presences in Central Africa, held in Libreville on 26 and 27 April 2018.

6. The main issues on the agenda of the Committee and its activities during the period under review are set out below.

A. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa

7. The Committee continued to serve as a forum for forging a shared understanding of the peace and security challenges in Central Africa and collective approaches for addressing them. In particular, the Committee examined relevant developments within each country, while also reviewing the main peace and security challenges across the subregion.

8. The Committee noted that its member States continued to face uncertain democratic and electoral processes, social tensions in the context of a heavy dependency on commodities and challenges posed by the global economy and impediments to the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law. Those challenges were compounded by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, transnational organized crime and the activities of mercenaries, and armed and terrorist groups at the regional level. The persistence of instability and conflicts across the subregion also had serious human rights and humanitarian consequences. In this regard, the Committee took note with concern of the security crisis in the Lake Chad Basin region, the Central African Republic and parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of tensions between Burundi and Rwanda and in the Pool region of the Congo and the anglophone North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon. During the forty-fifth meeting, some member States raised concerns about mounting distrust among Central African States due to the activities of mercenaries operating across borders and trying to undermine elected Governments.

9. The Committee dedicated a session of each of its two meetings to the regional dimension of the situation in the Central African Republic. The representatives of the Government of the Central African Republic, the ECCAS secretariat, the African Union Commission and MINUSCA made presentations on the various challenges to peace and security. The Committee urged its member States to provide political, technical and financial support for organizing, under the framework of the African Union-led African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, an inclusive national dialogue by the end of 2018. The representatives of the Central African Republic and its neighbouring countries, including Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, raised the issue of transhumance and its cross-border security implications. Pursuant to discussions held during its forty-fifth meeting, the Committee adopted a ministerial declaration (see annex I) in which it, inter alia, condemned the attacks against civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeepers; called for support for the African Initiative, including the activities of the panel of facilitators, while committing to the fight against impunity; and called upon member States to reinforce cross-border security cooperation mechanisms, including through the reactivation of mixed commissions.

B. Disarmament and arms control

1. Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly and Arms Trade Treaty

10. The Committee examined the status of the signature and ratification of legal instruments relating to disarmament and the non-proliferation of arms in the subregion, in particular the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly (Kinshasa Convention) (see A/65/517-S/2010/534, annex) and the Arms Trade Treaty (see General Assembly resolution 67/234 B). The ECCAS secretariat informed the Committee that its action plan towards implementation of the Convention was in line with the African Union master road map, entitled "Silencing the Guns by 2020". Six member States have created national commissions on small arms and light weapons, in line with the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa and the Kinshasa Convention. While progress had been made since the forty-fourth meeting, the Committee urged those of its member States that had not yet done so to ratify or accede to both instruments. As at the time of reporting, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Rwanda have not ratified the Convention.

11. The first Conference of States Parties to the Kinshasa Convention was held in Yaoundé from 11 to 13 June 2018. Six States parties and four signatory States to the Convention participated in the work of the Conference. A Conference Bureau was established, consisting of Cameroon (President), the Congo (first Vice-President) and Gabon (second Vice-President) for a period of two years. A permanent secretariat for the Kinshasa Convention was established within the ECCAS secretariat and a dedicated trust fund for the implementation of the Convention was also established. Cameroon, Chad and the Central African Republic are now parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, while Angola, Burundi, the Congo, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe are signatories. The fourth Conference of States Parties to the Treaty is scheduled to be held in Tokyo from 20 to 24 August 2018.

2. Update on the activities of the Office for Disarmament Affairs

12. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, which is part of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, continued to be an important partner of the Committee in the areas of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. During the two Committee meetings, representatives of the Centre gave briefings on relevant disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation activities in support of the States members of the Committee. The activities focused on technical assistance and capacity-building to prevent the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons through improved physical security and stockpile management, including of ammunition. In this regard, the Centre presented a capacity-building project to support member States in implementing the Kinshasa Convention.

C. Armed violence and terrorism in Central Africa

1. Issue of mercenaries in Central Africa

13. In the light of cross-border activities by armed groups in the subregion, the Committee, at its forty-sixth meeting, held a ministerial closed-door session devoted

to confidence-building measures. During the discussion, member States noted that the issue of mercenaries had become a major security concern, undermining trust and creating tensions among States members of ECCAS. In this regard, the representatives of Chad and Equatorial Guinea provided briefings on their positions and condemned the attempted coup in Equatorial Guinea in December 2017. The representative of Chad stressed that his was the first country to visit Malabo after the attempted coup to express its solidarity. As noted in the ministerial declaration adopted as the main outcome of the closed-door session (see annex IV), the Committee condemned the attempt to destabilize Equatorial Guinea, underlined its support to the country, expressed concern about the movement of mercenaries across the region and announced the decision to strengthen regional cooperation to fight transnational crime.

2. Regional strategy and plan of action for combating terrorism and the trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa

14. In accordance with the recommendations made at its forty-fifth meeting, the Committee urged the relevant peace and security organs of ECCAS, notably the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, to finalize the endorsement of the regional strategy and plan of action for combating terrorism and the trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, adopted at its forty-first meeting, held in Libreville in November 2015, and enable the ECCAS secretariat to follow up on the implementation of the strategy, which remained the responsibility of member States.

3. Boko Haram

15. During the forty-fifth and forty-sixth meetings of the Committee, representatives of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Multinational Joint Task Force provided extensive briefings on the activities of Boko Haram and its affiliated groups and the measures taken to counter them. It was noted that the operations of the Task Force had weakened the ability of Boko Haram to hold territory and conduct large-scale attacks. At the same time, Boko Haram remained a serious regional threat and retained the capacity to carry out isolated attacks against military and civilian targets through suicide bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices. The representative of the Commission highlighted the issue of returnees and those who were captured from Boko Haram, as well as the need for a coordinated and comprehensive response to tackle their disarmament, demobilization, deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration. The representatives of both the Commission and the Task Force stressed the need to design and implement non-military responses to complement the military engagement on the ground. The representative of the Task Force stressed the instrumental nature of cooperation with the local population, and the intelligence contributions from international partners. Coordination with civilian partners and confidence-building between the Task Force and local populations were deemed critical to the implementation of the Task Force mandate. The challenges and gaps that the Task Force continued to face regarding mobility, logistics and demining were also highlighted, as was the need for amphibious capacity and night-vision goggles. The representatives of both entities called for international support to reinforce their capacities.

16. The Committee highlighted humanitarian challenges facing Boko Haram-affected countries. During the forty-fifth meeting, representatives of Cameroon and Chad gave briefings on movements of persons at their borders, including the critical issues of refugees and internally displaced persons. They expressed concern about the vulnerabilities of local populations, including protection challenges, the collapse of community-based livelihoods and increased tensions between displaced populations

and host communities. Both Cameroon and Chad remained available to cooperate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and humanitarian partners to implement measures to address the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin region.

17. During the forty-fifth and forty-sixth meetings, representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs briefed the Committee on humanitarian challenges in Boko Haram-affected areas and emphasized that environmental challenges further compounded an already critical humanitarian situation as a result of Boko Haram activities in the Lake Chad Basin region. More than 2.4 million persons were internally displaced or refugees. Some 4.5 million people were affected by severe food insecurity; that number was expected to reach 5.8 million during the lean season from June to August. Over 500,000 children under the age of 5 were acutely malnourished. There was a significant increase in cases of sexual violence and abuse, as well as of the exploitation of children and other vulnerable people. Human rights violations were widespread and increasingly systematic, including the recruitment of boys and girls into armed and criminal groups. During 2018, a total of 10.7 million people were assessed as being in need of humanitarian assistance in the Lake Chad Basin region. The funding requirement for the humanitarian response was estimated at $1.6 billion, of which only $476.7 million had been mobilized. The attention of the Committee was also drawn to additional challenges, such as the protection of humanitarian actors and civil-military coordination.

18. The Committee welcomed the arrangements made by the ECCAS secretariat for the long-planned joint summit of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS and ECCAS on peace, security, stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, to be held on 30 July 2018, as requested by the Heads of State and Government of ECCAS in February 2015.

4. Lord's Resistance Army

19. The Committee expressed concern about the withdrawal of the Uganda People's Defence Forces, and of the United States Special Forces supporting them, from the African Union Regional Task Force combating the Lord's Resistance Army in the eastern part of the Central African Republic and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Committee noted that the withdrawals had created a security vacuum exploited by the Lord's Resistance Army and other armed groups. While significantly diminished, the Lord's Resistance Army retained the capacity to harm civilians in remote areas in both countries.

D. Poaching and transnational organized crime

20. The Committee reviewed developments regarding poaching and transnational organized crime, including in relation to illegal trade in wildlife and trafficking in drugs and persons. The Committee encouraged the relevant peace and security organs of ECCAS to support the operationalization of the strategies for the fight against poaching.

E. Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

21. During its forty-fifth and forty-sixth meetings, the Committee discussed progress made in the operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea and the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa. Representatives of the Interregional Coordination Centre provided extensive briefings on its activities and the measures

taken to counter maritime threats in the Gulf of Guinea. The Committee was informed that the operationalization of its centres in Zone G (Cabo Verde) and Zone A (Angola) was under way. The Committee was also informed that the Interregional Coordination Centre had received technical support from the United Nations, including through the provision of an expert on reform issues by UNODC and a resource mobilization expert by UNOCA. The representative called for the implementation of a number of measures, including the adoption of regional regulations relating to maritime piracy; the provision of ship detection systems equipment that meets international standards to the member States concerned; the provision of operating funds for the Interregional Coordination Centre and its operational structures, including the Regional Centre; the strengthening of cooperation between the judicial services and the operational bodies of the Interregional Coordination Centre; and the implementation of national strategies on maritime safety and security.

22. The Committee also called for the operationalization of all relevant strategies on maritime security and the revision of the Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa, adopted in Yaoundé in 2013. The representative of the Interregional Coordination Centre called for technical and financial support to set up coordination cells at the national level.

F. Implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Central Africa

23. During the reporting period, the Committee increased its focus on the women and peace and security agenda, in particular in relation to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the participation of women in decision-making processes.

24. During the forty-fifth and forty-sixth meetings, a representative of the ECCAS secretariat briefed the Committee on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in Central Africa and noted progress made towards gender mainstreaming at the national level, while highlighting continued challenges related to gender-based violence and sexual violence in conflict areas. The challenge of involving women in early warning mechanisms, mediation processes, governance and decision-making processes was also pointed out as priorities in Central Africa.

25. The Committee urged its member States to increase the representation of women in delegations attending the biannual meetings of the Committee, in accordance with the Sao Tome declaration on the participation of women in the statutory meetings of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (A/72/363, annex II). The Committee also made recommendations to: (a) set up an observatory on gender-based violence in Central Africa; (b) undertake a study on women's role in preventing violent extremism; (c) establish a joint specialized technical group to monitor the implementation of the ECCAS action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000); (d) increase the number of women within the national defence and security forces and United Nations peacekeeping operations; and (e) launch the "HeforShe" campaign in Central Africa.

G. Cooperation with international and regional organizations, with the support of United Nations entities

26. Through their active participation and contributions, the ECCAS secretariat, the African Union Commission, ECOWAS and various United Nations entities, including MINUSCA, MONUSCO, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs,

the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, UNODC, UNOWAS and UN-Women, continued to provide invaluable assistance to the efforts of the Committee to address peace and security challenges in Central Africa.

27. A representative of the ECCAS secretariat informed the Committee about the progress made in the institutional reform of the ECCAS peace and security architecture, launched at the sixteenth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in N'Djamena in May 2015. It was noted that the reforms remained a priority, as reaffirmed at the ministerial meeting of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, held in Libreville in March 2018. In cooperation with member States, a consultant was working on harmonizing the fundamental texts of ECCAS, reorganizing the institutional framework and developing an implementation plan. The final report was expected to be endorsed at the next Assembly of ECCAS Heads of State and Government.

H. Revitalization of the Committee

28. Pursuant to the recommendations on the revitalization of the work of the Committee adopted at its forty-fourth meeting in Yaoundé, the forty-fifth and forty-sixth meetings of the Committee implemented a new meeting format, with a more dynamic agenda attuned to peace and security developments and closed-door ministerial sessions on specific topics of interest. At the forty-fifth meeting, the situation in the Central African Republic and the reform of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa were discussed during the closed-door ministerial session, while confidence-building measures in Central Africa were discussed at the forty-sixth meeting. Thematic briefings by representatives of member States were also provided on a voluntary basis. During the forty-fifth meeting, the representative of Rwanda briefed the Committee on the free movement of people and goods, while the representatives of Cameroon and Chad provided an update on their efforts to address the needs of internally displaced persons and refugees in their respective countries. During the forty-sixth meeting, the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo made a presentation on electoral processes and the representative of Sao Tome and Principe reported on the country's experience with the democratic transfer of power.

29. The new format also enabled the Committee to host side events in partnership with civil society groups. At the forty-fifth meeting, youth representatives from ECCAS member States attended a side event and prepared a communiqué (see annex III), adopted by the Committee, calling for effective youth engagement in conflict prevention and resolution in Central Africa.

30. Pursuant to a request by States members of the Committee to develop a communication strategy for the Committee to enhance the visibility of its work, UNOCA presented such a strategy during a meeting of the Bureau of the Committee and the secretariat of ECCAS in September 2017. The strategy is focused on the involvement of relevant ECCAS organs and country focal points in all Committee-related activities, while also involving the media to publicize the Committee's activities. The strategy will be implemented in cooperation with the ECCAS secretariat and the respective host country of each Committee meeting.

III. Administrative and financial matters

31. The Committee recalled the Declaration on the trust fund of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa of 2009 (Libreville Declaration) (see A/64/85-S/2009/288, annex), adopted at its twenty-eighth ministerial meeting, and reviewed the financial status of the trust fund. It should be recalled that, during its forty-second meeting, the Committee adopted the Declaration on a binding annual contribution from States members of the Committee (Bangui Declaration) (A/71/293, annex V), introducing a binding annual contribution of $10,000 per year per member State and calling on the Heads of State and Government of member States to issue a decision to that effect. The Committee called on member States that had not yet done so to fulfil their financial commitments, in keeping with the spirit of the Libreville and the Bangui Declarations. At each of the two meetings, a representative of the Committee secretariat presented the balance of the contributions to date per country to member States of the Committee. As at 29 May 2018, the balance of the trust fund stood at $149,016.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

32. The Secretary-General welcomes the Committee's continuing efforts to consolidate peace and security in Central Africa in collaboration with subregional organizations, in particular ECCAS, and with the African Union, the United Nations system and other international partners. He is also encouraged by the renewed commitment of member States to the work of the Committee and welcomes the increased ministerial participation in its statutory meetings.

33. The Secretary-General commends Cameroon and Chad for their active engagement in the fight against Boko Haram, notably in the framework of the Multinational Joint Task Force, but remains concerned by the devastating socioeconomic, humanitarian, human rights and security impact of Boko Haram activities on the affected regions and populations. The recent spate of attacks in Cameroon and Nigeria, including through the increased use of young women and girls as suicide bombers, and mass abductions targeting education facilities, is a stark reminder that Boko Haram remains a threat and can only be defeated through a holistic approach that includes socioeconomic development, good governance and the protection of human rights. In this regard, the Secretary-General calls upon all Member States to conduct counter-insurgency operations in strict compliance with international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law. He also remains committed to continuing to mobilize international support for the States and communities of the Lake Chad Basin region in their efforts to confront the threat posed by Boko Haram and recover from its scourge, including through managing the increasing flow of surrendering and defecting fighters and their dependents, while taking into account the specific needs of women and children. The Secretary-General welcomes the plans of ECCAS and ECOWAS to hold a joint summit of Heads of State and Government on peace, security, stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism in July 2018. He encourages States members of the Committee to continue to support the regional efforts led by States members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and remains committed to mobilizing increased international support for this endeavour.

34. The Secretary-General calls upon States members of the Committee to take full ownership of the regional strategy and plan of action for combating terrorism and the trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa by finalizing its endorsement promptly through the ECCAS peace and security organs and ensuring its final adoption at the next Assembly of ECCAS Heads of States and Government.

The United Nations stands ready to continue to support the ECCAS secretariat in the implementation of the strategy, including through UNOCA.

35. The Secretary-General welcomes the first Conference of States Parties to the Kinshasa Convention, held in Yaoundé from 11 to 13 June 2018, as an important step forward in the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the spread of armed violence in Central Africa. The Convention, together with other African subregional instruments on small arms, creates a mutually reinforcing disarmament and arms control network across the continent and contributes to the implementation of aspiration 4 of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want of the African Union. He calls upon the States members of the Committee that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention and to establish their national commissions on small arms and light weapons, as stipulated therein. He also calls upon member States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Arms Trade Treaty.

36. The Secretary-General is concerned about continued violence perpetrated by armed groups in the Central African Republic. He welcomes the ongoing African Union-led African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation and the activities of its panel of facilitators, which are aimed at finding a durable solution to the protracted crisis facing the country. He calls on all stakeholders to work together closely to that end. In this regard, his Special Representative for Central Africa, in close collaboration with his Special Representative for the Central African Republic, will continue to advocate for support to be provided by the subregion for the stabilization and recovery of the Central African Republic, as reiterated in the declaration adopted in Kigali (annex I).

37. The Secretary-General is also concerned about the security vacuum resulting from the withdrawal of the forces deployed to combat the Lord's Resistance Army in the eastern part of the Central African Republic. He encourages the States concerned to adjust existing arrangements to ensure that the Lord's Resistance Army does not exploit that vacuum.

38. The Secretary-General welcomes the progressive operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea and encourages States members of the Committee, ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to remain committed to fully implementing the recommendations adopted at the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea. He reiterates his call to all Member States and partners to provide the resources necessary to ensure the full and sustainable operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre and the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa. In this regard, UNOCA, in collaboration with UNOWAS, will continue to assist organizations in both subregions.

39. The Secretary-General remains concerned about the continuing reports of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and their links to the financing of armed groups in Central Africa. He commends member States of the Committee for the measures taken to counter the problem and encourages them to take active steps to implement the Libreville Declaration on combating poaching in Central Africa (A/71/293, annex IV), calling for greater synergies and cooperation on the issue.

40. The Secretary-General welcomes the adoption of the Kigali Declaration on the reform of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (annex II). He believes that implementation of the measures adopted will be very helpful in further increasing the relevance and effectiveness of the Committee. In particular, he encourages the Committee and ECCAS to strengthen their cooperation and enhance synergies to promote confidence-building measures in the subregion as supported in the declaration adopted in Brazzaville (annex IV).

41. The Secretary-General encourages States members of the Committee to redouble their efforts to implement the declaration adopted in Sao Tome at the forty-third meeting, which includes a call for increased participation of women in the delegations of member States. He also encourages member States to continue to involve young people in conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, as requested by youth representatives in the communiqué adopted in Kigali (annex III).

42. The Committee urgently needs additional funding to continue its work. The Secretary-General therefore urges all States members of the Committee to fulfil their financial commitments, in line with the Libreville Declaration of 2009, highlighting the need for them to contribute regularly to the Committee trust fund, so that the Committee may continue to carry out its activities and serve as an essential confidence-building mechanism among the States in the subregion.

43. The Secretary-General is grateful for the support provided by the Department of Political Affairs, UNOCA and his Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA, François Louncény Fall, to ensure the functioning of the Committee. He also thanks MINUSCA, MONUSCO, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of his Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, UNODC, UNOWAS and UN-Women, for their participation in the meetings of the Committee. He looks forward to the conclusions of the Committee emanating from its forty-seventh and forty-eighth meetings, to be held in Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, respectively.

Annex I

[Original: French]

Kigali declaration on the situation in the Central African Republic

We, the ministers and heads of delegation of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, gathered in Kigali on the occasion of the forty-fifth ministerial meeting of the Committee,

Recalling the Bangui Declaration on the Central African Republic adopted at the forty-second meeting of the Committee on 10 June 2016 and the Yaoundé Declaration adopted at the forty-fourth meeting of the Committee on 2 June 2017,

Recalling the many long-standing efforts and resolutions of the executive bodies of the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States aimed at resolving the political and security crisis in the Central African Republic,

Guided by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitutive Act of the African Union, and by a subregional vision grounded in solidarity among States members and respect for human rights,

Reaffirming our strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Central African Republic, and recalling the importance of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a member State,

Seriously concerned about the fragile security situation in the Central African Republic caused by the continued presence of armed and criminal groups, some of which have links to such activities as poaching and transhumance,

Deeply concerned that the illicit trafficking, trade and exploitation of natural resources, including gold, diamonds and wild flora and fauna, are having a negative impact on the economies and development of all States in the subregion and continue to threaten peace and stability by financing criminal activities,

Reiterating our concern about activities linked to transnational crime in the subregion, which is at risk of becoming a breeding ground for mercenaries fomenting instability and violent extremism in the Central African Republic,

Disturbed by the severity of the crisis in the Central African Republic, and *expressing* our strong political determination to implement our joint decisions through bilateral and regional mechanisms in order to support and assist the Central African Republic in the areas of national reconciliation, security sector reform and post-conflict recovery,

Reiterating our firm resolve to support the efforts of the legitimate authorities of the Central African Republic, in particular those of President Faustin Touadera,

Thanking the countries of the subregion for their active engagement in the pursuit of sustainable peace in the Central African Republic,

Welcoming the strengthening of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic in accordance with Security Council resolution 2387 (2017) of 15 November 2017, and *reiterating* the importance of the Mission expanding its efforts to protect civilians, in particular in the east of the Central African Republic, in the context of the withdrawal of the United States and Ugandan forces combating the Lord's Resistance Army,

Taking note of the communiqué on the Central African Republic adopted on 21 November 2017 at the 737th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union,

1. *Strongly condemn* the acts of violence and violations of human rights, which target in particular women, children and other vulnerable persons;

2. *Strongly condemn also* the attacks by armed groups against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, humanitarian workers and the national defence and security forces;

3. *Reiterate* our support for the implementation of the road map of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and for the efforts of the Panel of Facilitators established in the context of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic;

4. *Encourage* the States members of the Economic Community of Central African States, in particular those on the Panel, to provide financial contributions to the budget for implementing the Initiative and to take measures to deny access to their territories to members of armed groups operating in the Central African Republic;

5. *Decide* to combat impunity more effectively by strengthening judicial and penitentiary cooperation and harmonizing the rules on prosecution between States and victim compensation;

6. *Request* States members to make the necessary efforts to prevent illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition and exercise greater control over arms traffickers, and to unite their efforts to manage transhumance corridors that can facilitate the circulation of the small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, which are sources of insecurity in the subregion, and *call for* the organization of a regional conference on transhumance under the auspices of the Economic Community of Central African States;

7. *Invite* the international community to strengthen the application of restrictions on the trade in natural resources from conflict zones, including through the Kimberley Process, and *decide* to expand our efforts to put an end to the illicit trafficking in natural resources that is financing criminal activities in our countries;

8. *Decide also* to strengthen border security cooperation among the countries neighbouring the Central African Republic, including through the strengthening of tripartite arrangements, in order to combat organized crime;

9. *Recommend* that States members of the Economic Community of Central African States, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and the international community as a whole, make a greater effort to have the Security Council ease the arms embargo in order to enable the equipping and rearmament of the Central African Armed Forces, and *encourage* the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic to continue to support the restoration of State authority throughout the national territory of the Central African Republic;

10. *Encourage* States members to train military instructors and units through bilateral agreements, with a view to strengthening the capacities of the Central African Armed Forces, and also *call for* the establishment of a training centre in the Central African Republic with training delivered by trainers from States members of the Economic Community of Central African States;

11. *Reiterate*, at the request of the authorities of the Central African Republic, that it is important for countries in the region to strengthen State capacities by making

available civilian, police and military personnel to support the Central African administration in the delivery of basic public services;

12. *Encourage* the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, in its capacity as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2018–2019, to serve as the voice of the Economic Community of Central African States on the Council in relation to priority issues concerning the Central African Republic and the subregion, in close collaboration with the other African non-permanent members of the Security Council;

13. *Decide* to remain seized of the situation in the Central African Republic.

DONE at Kigali on 8 December 2017

Annex II

[Original: French]

Kigali declaration on the reform of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa

We, the ministers and heads of delegation of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, gathered in Kigali on the occasion of the forty-fifth ministerial meeting of the Committee,

Guided by the principles enshrined in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations promoting the pacific settlement of local disputes through regional arrangements or agencies,

Recalling the Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the 2008 memorandum of understanding on relations between the African Union and the regional economic communities on peace and security matters,

Recalling the relevant provisions of the Treaty establishing the Economic Community of Central African States and the Protocol establishing the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa,

Recalling the final communiqué of the third meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, held in Brazzaville, and the final communiqué of the fourteenth session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States, held in Kinshasa in 2009, concerning the revision of the instruments of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa,

Recalling also the final communiqué of the sixteenth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States, adopted in N'Djamena on 25 May 2015, concerning the institutional reform of the Economic Community of Central African States,

Taking note of the terms of reference for the institutional and organizational reform of the Economic Community of Central African States and the recommendations made at the workshop on the reform of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa held in Yaoundé in June 2016,

Recognizing that it is important for the international community to benefit from the expertise and field experience of the Economic Community of Central African States in order to address the new challenges in the subregion, and *highlighting* that such expertise and experience underpin the cardinal role of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa in the peace and security machinery of the Central African subregion,

Stressing that it is important for the Council for Peace and Security to obtain the resources it needs in order to promote, maintain and consolidate peace and security in the subregion,

1. *Affirm* that the Committee fully supports the ongoing process of reform of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, which is an integral part of the global institutional reform of the Economic Community of Central African States and is in line with the African Peace and Security Architecture;

2. *Urge* the States members of the Committee and the international community to provide technical and financial support to accelerate the reform of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa;

3. *Decide* to remain seized of the matter and assess the progress made at the forty-sixth meeting of the Committee, in Brazzaville.

DONE at Kigali on 8 December 2017

Annex III

[Original: French]

Communiqué of the youth of the States members of the Economic Community of Central African States

We, the youth of the Panafrican Youth Network for the Culture of Peace and the national youth councils of the States members of the Economic Community of Central African States, gathered in Kigali on the occasion of the forty-fifth meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa,

Recalling United Nations Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), in which it is stated that "youth should actively be engaged in shaping lasting peace and contributing to justice and reconciliation, and that a large youth population presents a unique demographic dividend that can contribute to lasting peace and economic prosperity",

Taking into consideration the African Youth Charter, in particular its article 17, which recognizes the important role of youth in promoting peace and non-violence,

Congratulating the Governments of the States members of the Economic Community of Central African States, the General Secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Organization of la Francophonie for their efforts to promote greater youth engagement in conflict prevention and early warning in Central Africa,

1. *Call on* all youth in Central Africa to engage actively in the promotion and strengthening of the culture of peace;

2. *Urge* the States members of the Economic Community of Central African States to support participatory development and the implementation of national strategies by the relevant institutions, civil society and youth, at the local and national levels, to combat all forms of discrimination, including discrimination experienced by young migrants and the diaspora;

3. *Affirm* our commitment to supporting the promotion of an operational strategy to empower youth and enable them to contribute to development and integration in the Central African subregion, with the support of the Economic Community of Central African States, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Organization of la Francophonie;

4. *Respectfully request* the high-level authorities of the Economic Community of Central African States to take ownership of and support the implementation of the project "Youth capacity-building in managing associations, participating in the conflict and violence prevention system and contributing to the early warning system for peace and security in Central Africa".

DONE at Kigali on 8 December 2017

Annex IV

[Original: French]

Brazzaville declaration on confidence-building measures

We, the ministers and heads of delegation of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, gathered in Brazzaville on the occasion of the forty-sixth ministerial meeting of the Committee,

Guided by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitutive Act of the African Union, and by a subregional vision grounded in solidarity among States members and respect for human rights,

Drawing on the principles of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance concerning, *inter alia*, unconstitutional changes of Governments, which are one of one of the root causes of insecurity, instability and violent conflict in Africa,

Recalling the many long-standing efforts and resolutions of the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States aimed at resolving political and security crises in the subregion,

Reaffirming our strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and recalling the importance of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a member State,

Seriously concerned about the security situation that has arisen in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea as a result of the attempted destabilization of the country by mercenaries,

Deeply concerned that uncontrolled movement of illegal groups among the States of the subregion is having a negative impact on confidence among the States of the subregion and continues to threaten peace and stability,

Reiterating our concern about transnational threats that risk creating a breeding ground for mercenaries fomenting instability and violent extremism in the subregion,

Disturbed by the circumstances surrounding the attempted coup d'état in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and *expressing* our strong political determination to implement our joint decisions through bilateral and regional security and border cooperation mechanisms,

Reiterating our firm resolve to support the efforts of the legitimate authorities of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, in particular those of President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo,

Thanking the countries of the subregion for their active engagement in maintaining stability in Central Africa,

Welcoming the efforts of the countries of the subregion in the area of border security cooperation,

Noting that Alpha Condé, former Chairperson of the African Union, has condemned the attempt to destabilize Equatorial Guinea, and that several Heads of State have expressed support and solidarity,

1. *Strongly condemn also* the attempt to destabilize Equatorial Guinea;

2. *Reiterate* our support for and solidarity with our sister republic, Equatorial Guinea;

3. *Encourage* States members of the Economic Community of Central African States to collaborate and make the necessary efforts to eliminate the risk of mercenaries infiltrating their countries;

4. *Call on* the international community to condemn without reservation the attempted destabilization of an independent and sovereign State, and to support the States of the subregion in their efforts to combat cross-border crime;

5. *Decide* to strengthen border security cooperation among the countries of the subregion in order to combat organized crime, including through the strengthening of cooperation.

DONE at Brazzaville on 1 June 2018

United Nations A/73/225

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Seventy-third session
Item 20 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Sustainable development: follow-up to and implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Sustainable Development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 71/224, entitled "Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations", in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventy-third session on the status of implementation of the resolution. A range of activities undertaken at the national and regional levels by Member States, international development partners and other stakeholders to advance the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea are highlighted in the report. In addition, the annex contains a report of the Association of Caribbean States on progress made in implementation of the resolution.

* A/73/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 71/224, entitled "Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations", the General Assembly recognized that the Caribbean Sea was an area with unique biodiversity and highly fragile ecosystems and that, when compared with all other marine ecosystems, was surrounded by the largest number of countries in the world, many of which rely heavily on the marine environment for economic growth and sustainable development. The Assembly welcomed the continued efforts of Caribbean States to develop and implement regional initiatives to promote the sustainable conservation and management of coastal and marine resources and recalled the creation of the Caribbean Sea Commission of the Association of Caribbean States. In that regard, the Assembly invited the international community and the United Nations system to enhance their support to Caribbean countries and their regional organizations in efforts to implement the plan of action adopted by the Commission. The General Assembly also invited the Association to submit a report to the Secretary-General on progress made in implementation of the resolution, for consideration by the Assembly at its seventy-third session (see annex).

2. For the preparation of the present report, information was obtained through research and inputs from United Nations system organizations and regional and subregional organizations operating in the Caribbean.[1]

II. Legal and institutional landscape for the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea

3. Countries in the wider Caribbean region increasingly understand the interconnectedness of Caribbean Sea ecosystems, the transboundary nature of most issues affecting the marine resources in the region and the need for collaborative management of their shared resources. This is demonstrated by their significant commitment to participating in key global and regional multilateral environmental agreements. There is, however, considerable variation in the capacity of countries to effectively implement and monitor such agreements.

4. The Caribbean States are party to a number of international and regional agreements relating to the governance of ocean resources. Relevant global agreements include the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks; the Convention on Biological Diversity; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto, with its six annexes.

5. The regional agreements and instruments of relevance include the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region (the Cartagena Convention); the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas; the agreement establishing the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy; the

[1] Inputs were received from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Caribbean Community(CARICOM) Secretariat, the University of the West Indies; the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission; the Association of Caribbean States; and the United Nations Development Programme/Global Environment Facility Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems project.

Revised Statutes of the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission; the Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions establishing agreement; the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles; and the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of the Shared Living Marine Resources of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems Project.

6. Global and regional organizations also play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements; there are several such organizations, whose activities are particularly relevant to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. Some are regional intergovernmental organizations, such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, the secretariat of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)[2] and the Association of Caribbean States. Others are regional bodies of United Nations entities, for example, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit, and the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), an independent regional fisheries management organization. There is also a number of regional civil society organizations.

7. The regional bodies with specific mandates for the management of ocean-related activities are the following:

(a) **UNEP Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit**. This is the secretariat for the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Cartagena Convention and its protocols. The protocols relate to oil spills, land-based sources of marine pollution and specially protected areas and wildlife. The Caribbean Environment Programme also has a mandate to promote implementation in the wider Caribbean region of the Convention on Biodiversity, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. The Programme's membership includes all countries of the wider Caribbean region except Brazil;

(b) **Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission of FAO**. It was constituted under article VI of the FAO Constitution;

(c) **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions**. It serves to implement the Commission's mandate in the wider Caribbean region. The Sub-Commission has implemented a number of science and information-sharing projects in the region, including the Caribbean Marine Atlas, and is also responsible for promoting ocean acidification monitoring in the region;

(d) **International Maritime Organization**. The organization has a regional office in Trinidad and Tobago and is supporting the Caribbean Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control, the secretariat of which is in Jamaica.

8. Civil society organizations play an important role in facilitating stakeholder engagement in ocean governance. The most prominent of these are the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute, which focuses on community involvement in management and has a coastal and marine programme; the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations, which promotes representation of fishers in regional

[2] The OECS secretariat is supporting the implementation of the Eastern Caribbean Regional Ocean Policy. The Policy promotes a common approach to ocean governance in all OECS member States and has a number of priorities and goals, many of which are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

fisheries matters in CARICOM; and the Association of Marine Laboratories of the Caribbean, which provides a forum for exchange of information among laboratories.

9. For the majority of countries in the region, the importance of building the shared capacity needed for the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea cannot be overstated. This is also important for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including all of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. Countries in the wider Caribbean region recognize the increasing role that global and regional authorities, civil society organizations and international development partners must play in boosting resilience and increasing gains in the economic, social and environmental domains.

III. Current activities of Caribbean States and other key stakeholders

A. United Nations Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework

10. The major regional activity relating to the assessment of a baseline to gauge the current status and subsequent implementation of efforts aimed at achieving the full suite of Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 14, in the Caribbean region is the United Nations Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework for the Caribbean. One of the four priority areas of the Framework — namely, a sustainable and resilient Caribbean — addresses several Goals, including Goal 14. This priority area focuses on support for strengthening institutional and community resilience at the regional and national levels in terms of natural resources management; the protection and sustainable use of terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems; renewable energy systems; and inclusive and sustainable societies.

11. The 2017–2021 Framework defines how the various agencies, funds, and programmes of the United Nations system will pool their comparative advantages within a single strategic framework that aligns with and supports the overarching strategic goals of the Caribbean's Governments and key stakeholders. The expectation is to allow for a focus on common priorities, enhance regional initiatives and collaboration and enable knowledge-sharing and cross-collaboration within the region. In order to facilitate this, the entities of the United Nations system in the Caribbean will work with committees and institutions established with CARICOM and OECS to identify subregional initiatives and programmes for implementation through the Framework.

B. Land-based and marine-based sources of pollution

12. The Caribbean Sea region is being endangered by pollution from both land- and sea-based sources. The Cartagena Convention covers several aspects of marine pollution for which the Contracting Parties must adopt specific measures. The Convention, which has been ratified by 25 States Members of the United Nations in the wider Caribbean region, covers the marine environment of the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea and adjacent areas of the Atlantic Ocean, south of 30th parallel north and within 200 nautical miles of the Atlantic coasts of the contracting party States.

13. The UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme continues to actively promote accession to and ratification of the Cartagena Convention's protocols as well as activities for the implementation of the obligations under the protocols at the national

and regional levels. The agreement for hosting the Regional Activity Centre for the Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities at the Institute of Marine Affairs in Trinidad and Tobago was signed by UNEP and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in July 2017. Discussions are ongoing between the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Government of Cuba for the formalization of the country's Centre of Engineering and Environmental Management of Coasts and Bays as the other Regional Activity Centre for the Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities. A memorandum of understanding was also signed by the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute in Trinidad and Tobago to focus on analytical testing and techniques for water, wastewater and air, land-based interventions for improving water quality in marine and freshwater environments, groundwater and aquifer assessment, alternative processes and technologies for waste management and climate change mitigation.

14. The working group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment of the Caribbean Environment Programme continued to further develop the "state of the Convention area report", which is intended to respond to gaps in monitoring and assessment programmes of patterns and trends in the environmental quality of the Convention area.

15. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management Plus project identification form was developed by the Caribbean Environment Programme, Inter-American Development Bank and the GEF Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management Project Management Unit. It was submitted to the GEF secretariat for consideration in July 2016. Following the approval of the project concept in November 2017, close liaison has begun with all countries to secure their input, endorsement and financing for the project.

16. The Caribbean Environment Programme also worked with the Project Management Unit of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/GEF Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems Project to support the implementation of project activities. The focus during the reporting period was on developing a proposal for an ecosystem-based management project for the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf. The proposal was finalized, submitted and approved by the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems Project Coordinating Unit and will provide approximately $300,000 in financial support for activities in Brazil, Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

17. The Caribbean Environment Programme and FAO convened a joint inception workshop for the two UNDP/GEF Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems and ecosystem-based management sub-projects for the North Brazil Shelf. The workshop focused on the FAO-led ecosystem approach to fisheries project and UNEP-led ecosystems-based management project for pollution and habitats. The joint effort will facilitate the coordinated implementation of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems sub-projects on shrimp and groundfish and on strengthening ecosystems-based management frameworks and ocean governance in the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem.

18. During the 2017 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic and the Caribbean Environment Programme registered a voluntary commitment to collaborate across the Atlantic and wider Caribbean region. The focal areas identified for interregional cooperation include marine protected areas, marine litter and ecosystem-based approaches. Project activities will include a marine litter database and monitoring of those marine protected areas managed by the Caribbean Environment Programme and Caribbean Marine Protected Area Management Network and Forum. To raise public awareness

and outreach, a conference will be organized to focus on marine litter and marine protected area issues. Training and capacity-building will also be enhanced within the partnership with a full-sized project proposal on marine protected area monitoring. So far, funding support for the partnership has been secured from the Government of Netherlands in the amount of £10,000 ($11,807) and the Government of Sweden in the amount of 1,000,000 SEK ($115,806).

19. The first joint United Nations human security programme, on strengthening human resilience in Northern Clarendon and West Kingston, Jamaica, is being jointly implemented by the Government of Jamaica and five United Nations entities in the country: FAO, the Pan American Health Organization, UNDP, UNEP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Over a three-year period (November 2017 to October 2020), the Caribbean Environment Programme will support the implementation of activities related to improving water and sanitation in selected vulnerable communities in Jamaica. Activities will include development of effective models for participatory management and operation of community-based water systems and training stakeholders in the design, construction, use and maintenance of water harvesting systems. Funding is being provided by the Government of Jamaica, the United Nations entities and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security.

20. The Caribbean Environment Programme continues to collaborate with the recently established UNEP Subregional Office for the Caribbean in Jamaica. The Office was established in February 2016 to strengthen the presence of UNEP in the Caribbean. Like the Caribbean Environment Programme, the work of the Office is based on an integrated approach to the sustainable use and management of natural resources and ecosystems. The Office helps countries of the Caribbean to programme activities jointly through the Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework. This partnership enables greater synergies and coordination between the work of UNEP and the Caribbean Environment Programme. Areas of collaboration to date have focused on waste and chemicals management.

21. The Caribbean Environment Programme finalized a report on the status of plastics and Styrofoam (expanded polystyrene foam) bans in the wider Caribbean region. A growing number of Governments are committed to or have been introducing policies to regulate the production, import and use of plastic bags and Styrofoam products. The report summarizes policies and bans that have been implemented in the region, identifies lessons learned for policymakers that will assist in future efforts to regulate the use and production of disposable plastics and analyses the bans that are in action or are to be promulgated among all the countries of the region.

C. Projects

22. There are several ongoing regional and subregional projects that are contributing to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. They are funded by a wide range of donors and focus on an array of themes. Some of the most significant are described below.

1. Caribbean Challenge Initiative

23. The Caribbean Challenge Initiative is a coalition of Governments, companies and partners working together to accelerate action on the marine and coastal environment. Founded in 2008 by a group of Caribbean Governments to enhance the conservation of their marine and coastal resources, the Initiative has since grown to include private sector partners and garner over $75 million in funding commitments. Governments and territories signed a Caribbean Challenge Initiative Leaders

Declaration in May 2013 committing them to protect and conserve 20 per cent of their marine and coastal resources by 2020 (target 14.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals).

2. Caribbean Marine Biodiversity Program

24. The overall objective of the United States Agency for International Development-funded Caribbean Marine Biodiversity Program is to reduce threats to marine-coastal biodiversity in priority areas in the Caribbean, including high biodiversity ecosystems such as coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds, in order to achieve sustained biodiversity conservation, maintain critical ecosystem services and realize tangible improvements in human well-being for communities adjacent to marine protected areas. The project involves actions at four geographic levels (site, seascape, national and regional) and specifically targets seven priority marine protected areas within four Caribbean priority seascapes: the Dominican Republic; Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Haiti; and Jamaica. The programme runs from 2014 to 2019.

3. Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystem Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States

25. Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystem Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States is a five-year (2016–2021) regional multi-focal area project with a GEF cash allocation of $20.7 million and a total budget of $88.7 million, including cash and in-kind co-financing. There are 10 participating Caribbean countries. UNEP and UNDP are the co-implementing entities, with UNEP as the lead agency. The Caribbean Environment Programme is the lead co-executing agency, with the Caribbean Public Health Agency as the other. The project's primary goal is to implement an integrated approach to water, land and ecosystems services management, supported by policy, institutional and legislative reforms, and to implement effective appropriate technologies to accelerate contribution to global targets on access to safe and reliable water supplies. The project also works on innovative solutions for reduced pollution and improved fresh- and coastal water resources, considering the additional challenges imposed by climate change and climate variability.

26. Work has commenced under the project on a marine litter policy assessment report, focusing on bans on Styrofoam and single-use plastic bags already in place or under preparation in the wider Caribbean region. It is expected that lead institutions, OECS and the Caribbean Public Health Agency will, with partners, further advance the policy and legislative aspects related to marine litter.

4. Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems Project

27. The Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems Project is focused on an ecosystem approach to the governance of transboundary living marine resources in the wider Caribbean region. Countries of the region have been working to address transboundary governance, with the support of the GEF, through two development phases (1998–1999 and 2006–2008) and two full phases (2009–2013 and 2015–2020) of the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystems and adjacent areas project covering the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf large marine ecosystems. This has included transboundary diagnostic analyses for the three fishery ecosystems and for governance and the preparation of the project's Strategic Action Programme as a road map for improved ocean governance for the period 2015–2025. The Strategic Action Programme has been signed by 25 countries in the region, and all the major regional organizations with responsibility for aspects of ecosystem-based management of oceans are engaged in its implementation.

28. The Strategic Action Programme is structured around a regional ocean governance framework to enhance governance efforts under six strategic themes that are aimed at protecting the marine environment and sustainable fisheries, developing a regional policy coordinating mechanism for living marine resources and promoting ecosystem-based management of reefs and associated ecosystems, pelagic ecosystems and continental shelf ecosystems. It should be noted that GEF funding serves only to catalyse rather than cover in full the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme. The project therefore focuses on partnership-building. In fact, all regional organizations are providing considerable support for the Programme in the form of core activities and projects funded from other sources.

29. Through the project, two memorandums of understanding promoting enhanced collaboration with regional organizations have been formalized. The Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries, encompassing three regional fisheries bodies (Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization), is aimed at enhancing regional governance for sustainable fisheries by formalizing an interim arrangement to facilitate, support and strengthen the coordination of actions among the Regional Fisheries Bodies in the Western Central Atlantic region. The Interim Coordination Mechanism of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems Strategic Action Programme, which was formalized in August 2017, seeks to enhance regional coordination and collaboration, support oversight and integration of actions for sustainable fisheries and the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment.

30. Eight organizations make up the Interim Coordination Mechanism: FAO, represented by the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission; UNEP, represented by its Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit and secretariat to the Cartagena Convention; the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization; the Central American Commission for Environment and Development; the CARICOM secretariat; the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism; and the OECS Commission.

31. The Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project also supports the development of regional strategies, action plans and investment plans to address unsustainable fisheries, habitat degradation and community modification, and pollution. The project is also facilitating the development of an overarching framework for monitoring and evaluating progress in the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme as well as the preparation of an integrated, sustainable and institutionalized assessment and reporting mechanism on the state of the marine environment and associated economies. Through that assessment and reporting process, the available data and information on the state of the marine environment, associated governance mechanisms/processes and socioeconomic factors will be transformed and made accessible to regional and national-level policy and decision-makers and to the global donor and development aid community, thus providing a basis for informed decision-making in support of enhanced marine resources governance.

32. The large marine ecosystem concept provides a meaningful geospatial concept for forging and promoting collaboration for ecosystem-based management among various stakeholders. Efforts to better engage regional civil society organizations in implementation of the project's Strategic Action Programme are currently ongoing, including through the development of a dedicated "civil society" version of the Strategic Action Programme. With the financial support of the project, efforts are also ongoing to formalize and progressively expand a global partnership for the protection, sustainable management and use of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf large marine ecosystems.

5. Marine litter management

33. Marine pollution and coastal degradation have become serious development issues in the wider Caribbean region. Coastal and marine ecosystems are being negatively affected by pollution, including solid waste and marine litter, which threatens livelihoods through economic losses to the tourism, shipping and fishing sectors in particular. The impact of marine pollution also poses risks to human health.

34. The UNEP Regional Seas Coordination Office and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities developed the Global Initiative on Marine Litter for establishing and developing pilot activities in regions that are most affected. This initiative provides a global platform for the establishment of partnerships, cooperation and coordination of activities for the control and sustainable management of marine litter.

35. The Global Partnership on Marine Litter supports the work of the Global Partnership on Waste Management to reduce and manage marine litter and thereby protect human health and the marine environment. It also addresses the ecological and economic impacts of marine litter globally. The Caribbean node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter was launched in 2016 and is co-hosted by the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute, a regional not-for-profit organization. Several activities have been initiated under the umbrella of marine litter management within the region.

36. The UNEP #CleanSeas campaign launch was announced at the 2017 World Ocean Summit in Bali, Indonesia. The campaign is aimed at eliminating major sources of marine litter, such as microplastics in cosmetics and single-use plastics, over the next five years. Within one year of the launch of the global campaign, the Governments of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, France, Grenada, Panama and Saint Lucia made commitments under the campaign to eliminate marine litter. In June 2018, Guyana also joined the initiative.

37. One challenge facing the wider Caribbean region is poorly developed solid waste management infrastructure, which gives rise to waste streams that negatively affect inland waterways (including streams and gullies), rivers, coastal communities, and marine ecosystems. The Trash Free Waters initiative in the Caribbean aims to reducing marine litter by improving solid waste management. Jamaica, as a pilot country, will work with partners to control, reduce and prevent land-based sources of trash and solid waste from entering waterways and polluting the coastal and marine environment.

38. The Caribbean Environment Programme, with financial support from the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States of America, will promote synergies and coordination between various ongoing solid waste and marine litter projects and activities, and assist participating countries in developing a more integrated and cohesive approach to solid waste and marine litter management with an emphasis on local communities. The Caribbean Environment Programme will guide the process and work with non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and other stakeholders in the region to help implement these solid waste/marine litter management projects and to promote a more consistent message to stakeholders and the public concerning solid waste management.

39. In Jamaica, the Sandals Foundation is coordinating the implementation of project activities in the towns of Bluefields and White House. Work has been initiated within the communities to identify solid waste priorities and monitoring and clean-up sites. Links were also established with the national project on plastic waste minimization, supported by the UNEP Subregional Office for the Caribbean. That project is aimed at enhancing the legislative framework for improved waste

management systems to reduce plastic marine litter generated from land-based activities. The two-year project (2018–2020) is funded through the International Environmental Technology Centre in Japan and is valued at approximately $700,000.

6. Ocean acidification

40. Adapting to climate change is also important for the Caribbean Sea region. As part of the International Atomic Energy Agency's regional programme in Latin America and the Caribbean, a project entitled "Strengthening regional monitoring and response for sustainable marine and coastal environments" is being implemented. The project focuses on raising awareness of the results of the previous project[3] and has the ultimate goal of improving marine-environment management of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean through actionable information provided through a monitoring and response network.

D. Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission

41. The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission was established in 1973 by the FAO Council and currently comprises 33 countries and the European Union as members. Almost all Caribbean and Central American countries are members of the Commission, whose objective is to promote the conservation, management and development of living marine resources in the Commission's area of operation, in line with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and to address common fisheries management and development problems faced by Commission members.

42. During the reporting period, a range of activities have been undertaken by the Commission's secretariat. This included development of the GEF-funded project, Developing Organizational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries (known as StewardFish), which commenced in early 2017, and the Sustainable Management of Bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean Trawl Fisheries project. The latter is a $5.6 million project that promotes the international by-catch guidelines and introduces by-catch reduction technology to the region.

43. Support for the application of the international Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries was carried out in close collaboration with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, the University of the West Indies Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute, the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations, various national fisherfolk organizations and national fisheries divisions and departments.

44. The Regional Working Group on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, established by the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission at its 15th session, was convened by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism with financial support from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States Department of Commerce, the European Union, the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems Project and the World Bank-funded Caribbean Billfish Project. Two meetings of the Regional Working Group were held in 2017, aimed at, inter alia, increasing awareness and understanding of the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing problem in the Caribbean region and also increasing the capacity of States to more effectively collaborate in preventing, deterring and eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the Caribbean region.

[3] The project is entitled "Establishing the Caribbean observing network for ocean acidification and its impact on harmful algal blooms, using nuclear and isotopic techniques".

45. Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017 devastated various islands in the Caribbean region and had a detrimental effect on the fisheries sector. The FAO, through the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, provided fisheries disaster needs assessment guidance to the affected countries and developed and supported various emergency projects for the sector's rehabilitation in Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda. Various Commission members also provided support to each other in the aftermath of the natural disasters.

46. With support from the Caribbean Billfish Project, a regional workshop on recreational fisheries statistics in the Caribbean was held in June 2017. The workshop brought together 38 representatives from 13 Caribbean countries, regional fisheries bodies, fisheries technical advisory institutions, non-governmental organizations, fishery statistics specialists and other relevant stakeholders. Participants' knowledge of regional fishery data challenges and their capacities to address these challenges effectively were developed during the workshop.

E. Moving towards a blue economy

47. Marine-based tourism is a major contributor to the economy of many Caribbean countries. The World Travel and Tourism Council estimated that in 2016, travel and tourism, in terms of economic impact (direct, indirect and induced), accounted for 14.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), with many countries having a much greater dependence on the sector. For example, travel and tourism accounted for 30.3 per cent of GDP for Jamaica, 39.9 per cent for Barbados, 44.8 per cent for the Bahamas and 60.4 per cent for Antigua and Barbuda.

48. As such, a growing number of Caribbean States have expressed their desire to explore sustainable, ocean-based economy policies, in recognition of the countless benefits to be derived therefrom in terms of food, employment, foreign exchange, culture and recreation. Through the development and use of evidence-based policy interventions at the national and regional levels, for example, in the fisheries, trade and tourism sectors, the marine environment can make significantly enhanced contributions to economic growth, welfare and prosperity, provide countries with a basis for pursuing low-carbon and resource-efficient development and boost national policy coherence.

49. The Caribbean region has embraced the notion of reaping economic benefits from its ocean spaces as the centrepiece of future growth strategies and has begun to put in place policy, legal and institutional frameworks to address this. Grenada has made several strides in that regard. During the 2017 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, the Government of Grenada fostered a partnership with the Ministry of Economic Affairs) of the Government of the Netherlands on a project to support Grenada's national transformation to a blue economy ocean State and the development of a national blue economy and oceans governance institute. The partnership is aimed at supporting sustainable increases in the productivity of marine food systems, single-use and multi-use coastal and ocean spaces, the livelihoods of coastal populations that are threatened by climate change and practices that contribute to sustainable use of coastal and marine resources. A concept note for optimizing Grenada's coastal, marine and ocean resources and establishing a dedicated institute in the country for blue growth and oceans governance will be developed.

F. Activities of the Caribbean Sea Commission

50. Activities of the Caribbean Sea Commission are described in the annex to the present report. During the reporting period, the Commission focused, inter alia, on revitalization of its work and, in that regard, the Association of Caribbean States continued to position the Commission as the primary mechanism for coordination and cooperation in activities promoting the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. For the 2016–2018 period, the Commission is building on that momentum by continuing to coordinate projects and activities aimed at preserving the Caribbean Sea and continuing its work to develop the proposed new concept of a special area in the context of sustainable development, with the ultimate goal of designating the Caribbean Sea as such an area. Other notable activities during the 2016–2018 period include the Association's participation in the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 held in 2017.

51. Through its recent revitalization, the Caribbean Sea Commission is pursuing actively the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea, including with such activities as joint research, management projects, meetings and information-sharing mechanisms aimed at improving coordination and cooperation in marine environmental management issues and in the relevant decision-making processes.

IV. Possible legal and financial implications of the concept of designating the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development

52. The call to designate the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development was first made at a Caribbean ministerial meeting held in 1997 on the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The Caribbean Sea Commission was created under the auspices of the Association of Caribbean States in 2006 and identified as the mechanism for pursuing the goal that designation.

53. In working towards that goal, the Caribbean Sea Commission has divided its activities into two parallel work streams, focusing on: (a) coordinating marine preservation in the region and maximizing collaborative project opportunities; and (b) developing the concept of a special area in the context of sustainable development through consultation, consensus and awareness building. The second stream of work will take into account the existing international legal framework, including applicable global and regional agreements. As the Secretary-General has stated previously, those agreements include in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out, as well as other international instruments that implement or further develop its general principles.[4]

54. Any assessment of the financial implications of designating the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development would first depend on the exact definition of the concept of such a special area, the extent of its application, its legal status in international law and an assessment of the intended impacts, against some previously defined baseline. That work is still ongoing by the Association of Caribbean States (see annex).

[4] See A/65/301, paras. 5–13.

V. Conclusion

55. Member States in the wider Caribbean region have continued in the current biennium to work collaboratively on behalf of their shared resource, the Caribbean Sea. They have been supported in their efforts by the international community, including partner Governments, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector. Their efforts address economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development and often include capacity-building components. In addition, the ecosystem-based approach has been adopted in many cases, which has made it possible to consider the cumulative impacts of environmental issues and challenges on the Caribbean marine environment and for policymakers to work across sectors to manage species and habitats, economic activities, conflicting uses and the sustainability of resources.

Annex

Progress made in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/224

Report of the Caribbean Sea Commission of the Association of Caribbean States

I. Introduction

1. The Caribbean Sea is considered to be a semi-enclosed sea and the most geopolitically complex large marine ecosystem in the world. This is owing to the fact that it has the highest number of countries of the world's large marine ecosystems, and the highest number of maritime boundaries of any large marine ecosystem in the world. The Caribbean Sea is considered to be the common patrimony of the peoples of the greater Caribbean region. It is a fragile and complex marine area shared by countries of varying sizes and with different levels of progress in their sustainable development. The populations of those countries depend upon the sea for their development and draw from it their cultural identity. Therefore, in order to facilitate the sustainable management and development of the Caribbean Sea, it is necessary to promote structures that connect the wider region to facilitate coordination of projects and policies that relate to the Caribbean Sea.

2. The Caribbean Sea Initiative was established in 1999 out of the recognition by Caribbean member States that the Caribbean Sea had unique characteristics, including the fact that it was semi-enclosed, that it had a high level of vulnerability and that there was a need to administer its resources in a sustainable way.

3. The Caribbean Sea Commission was subsequently created under the auspices of the Association of Caribbean States in 2006 as a follow-up commission to the Caribbean Sea Initiative. The Caribbean Sea Commission has been designated as the mechanism to pursue the goal of having the Caribbean Sea designated a special area in the context of sustainable development. The creation of the Commission reflected the commitment of member States of the Association of Caribbean States to preserve and protect the Caribbean Sea. It has worked since then to improve the coordination of preservation efforts in the wider Caribbean region.

4. During the 2014–2016 period, the member States of the Association of Caribbean States revitalized the work of the Commission through the execution of a consultancy mandated by Heads of Government to assess the implications of the special area status, hosting the first symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission and contracting a Programme Coordinator.

5. The coastal areas of the wider Caribbean region are considered to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of anthropogenic climate change, particularly sea-level rise and extreme events such as hurricanes, given the large number of small island developing States.

6. Continuing the revitalization work that started during the 2014–2016 period, the Association of Caribbean States has continued to position the Commission as the primary mechanism for coordination and cooperation in activities promoting the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. For the 2016–2018 period, the Commission has built on this momentum by continuing to coordinate projects and activities aimed at preserving the Caribbean Sea as the common patrimony of its member States and developing a process of consultation for achieving a consensus on the concept of a special area in the context of sustainable development.

7. Notable highlights in the 2016–2018 period include the Association's participation in the landmark 2017 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The Association's main objectives align with several of the targets outlined, including conserving and increasing the resilience of the Caribbean Sea area and its coasts, addressing issues such as ocean acidification and maximizing the benefits of marine resources through sustainable practices.

8. The present report provides an outline of the activities and progress made during the 2016–2018 period and the proposed activities for 2018–2019 period, as they relate to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/224, entitled "Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for the present and future generations", as follows:

(a) Introduction of the Caribbean Sea Commission Parallel Process;

(b) Launch of the sandy shorelines project;

(c) Deepening collaboration with regional institutions;

(d) Future activities of the Commission.

II. Caribbean Sea Commission parallel process

9. At the first extraordinary meeting of the Caribbean Sea Commission, held on 5 February 2018, the Association of Caribbean States proposed a new approach to classifying the activities of the Caribbean Sea Commission. Recognizing the requests made by General Assembly in its resolution 71/224 and by the Secretary General in his previous report (A/71/265), the Association and the Commission have developed the Caribbean Sea Commission parallel process to define the special area while coordinating its preservation. This process was developed through a series of consultations and concept papers and is divided into two parallel "streams" of activities.

10. The first stream is entitled "Coordinating marine preservation in the region and maximizing collaborative project opportunities". This stream recognizes that special area designation by the General Assembly must be supported by a practical work programme of projects and initiatives that coordinate the management of these shared resources.

11. The second stream, entitled "Achieving special area in the context of sustainable development through consultation, consensus and awareness building" provides a road map for achieving a clear definition of the concept of a special area in the context of sustainable development. This is particularly important as the member States of the Association of Caribbean States are seeking to establish a new concept without prejudice to international law.

A. Stream 1: Coordinating marine preservation in the region and maximizing collaborative project opportunities

12. This stream involves the implementation of tangible projects for cooperative management of the Caribbean Sea through the enhancement of relationships with key institutions related to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. The following proposals are intended to be achieved through the work programme of the Commission.

13. *Implementation of the Havana projects*. Cognizant of the instructions laid out in the Havana Declaration and the 2016–2018 Plan of Action, the Commission continues to implement the projects defined therein. The flagship project of the Commission, "sandy Shorelines", described in the present report, establishes a template for future cooperation and coordination projects to be executed by the Commission.

14. *Coordination of regional maritime efforts through collaboration*. The Commission intends to continue building relationships with key regional projects and initiatives through the establishment of project partnerships and, where appropriate, memorandums of understanding. Thee coordination efforts are intended to reduce duplication of effort and enhance the communication of science, solutions and resource opportunities for Association of Caribbean States decision makers. Initially, partnerships are proposed with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Caribbean Environment Programme, the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization(OSPESCA), the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems Project and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, through collaboration on existing projects of the Association or on the joint development of new projects for consideration.

15. *Facilitation of relevant existing legal agreements*. The Commission, where requested by its member States, will facilitate the ratification of relevant international agreements to bring the member States of the Association under a common legal standard. This role was articulated clearly in General Assembly resolutions 54/225 and 67/205.

B. Stream 2: Achieving special area in the context of sustainable development through consultation, consensus and awareness building.

16. Critical to achieving the status of special area in the context of sustainable development is internal consensus among the member States of the Association of Caribbean States on the definition of this concept. The Commission envisions that this will require a process of consultation, consensus and continued awareness building at the national, regional and, eventually, global levels.

17. This definition will consider existing global and regional agreements[1] to which member States of the Association are party, existing definitions of "special zone", the shortcomings of such agreements and their level of ratification among member States.

18. This definition will be based on the best available information on what makes the Caribbean Sea unique, and considering its unique nature, what member States desire regarding its management. These desires must reflect a concerted effort towards integrated management of the Caribbean Sea and a mechanism whose success is based on participation and consensus-building rather than on punitive actions.

19. The secretariat of the Commission recommends, as a two-year process, to be further elaborated as a project for funding as necessary, the convening of a special area in the context of sustainable development working group, comprising the members of the Caribbean Sea Commission's Legal and Scientific and Technical

[1] In particular, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, adopted in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, on 24 March 1983, and its protocols, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Sub-Commissions, the Commission's board and the secretariat of the Association. The working group would:

(a) Map existing legal concepts of a special area, particularly those which apply to the Caribbean Sea, and indicate how, through its work, the Commission could add value with a special area in the context of sustainable development. It is proposed that this step be led by the Legal Sub-Commission;

(b) Examine the conceptual elements of a "special area" within the relevant international instruments and determine how these could be extended and/or applied to the concept of special area in the context of sustainable development;

(c) Develop a draft working concept on a special area in the context of sustainable development. The concept would be defined as a starting ground for consultations by all member States.

20. During this process, the working group would benefit from inviting appropriate bodies such as the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme (as implementing agency for the Cartagena Convention and its protocols), or representatives from the secretariats of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Caribbean Development Bank. The process would serve to enhance understanding of the gaps in the implementation of other agreements and identify how the Association and its Commission could add value in the current landscape without duplicating efforts.

III. "Sandy Shorelines" project

21. In the previous report of the Secretary General (A/71/265), the Commission detailed two proposed projects under the future activities of the Caribbean Sea Commission. These projects were presented by the Government of Cuba at the first meeting of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission. The projects focused on: the preservation of coral reefs; and on the management and monitoring of coastal erosion. The Association of Caribbean States has received funding for the latter project, which is currently being implemented.

22. The project, entitled "Impact assessment of climate change on sandy shorelines", focuses on building the coastal resilience of members of the Association of Caribbean States through coordinated and enhanced monitoring of coastal erosion and sea-level rise. It is the flagship project of the Commission and the Association. After concluding negotiations with the Korea International Cooperation Agency, the project, valued at $4.16 million, was launched on 28 July 2017.

23. The project is also supported financially by generous contributions from Turkey, which funded the critical inception phase of the project. In addition, the Netherlands provided financial support to facilitate the involvement of the Dutch associate members of the Association of Caribbean States.

24. Finally, the Caribbean Sea Commission is a partner on the CARIB-COAST INTERG project, which focuses on enhancing coastal erosion modelling and decision-making support in the French associate members of the Association of Caribbean States, namely, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Sint Maarten. The partnership on this project will supplement the efforts of the sandy shorelines project, while ensuring that efforts are coordinated with French associate members of the Association.

IV. Deepening collaboration with regional institutions

25. In recognition of the need to involve more member States of the Association of Caribbean States in projects, the Association's secretariat has been engaged in dialogue with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre in Belize regarding the possibility of jointly seeking additional funding for the sandy shorelines project and working together to deepen regional scientific collaboration and reduce duplication of efforts.

26 The Caribbean Sea Commission continues its discussions with UNEP to enable the latter's participation as an observer in the sandy shorelines project, so as to seek synergies and reduce duplication of efforts in the region.

27. Finally, cognizant of the high importance placed on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Commission is currently developing a concept paper on how it can assist in the implementation and monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal 14, (Life below water), through building partnerships with UNEP, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and other entities working in this area.

V. Future Activities of Caribbean Sea Commission

28. *Coral reef project*. The secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States continues to seek funding for its project on coral reefs, which entails the development of three aquarium bases in the Caribbean region to preserve coral genetic resources and enhance regional knowledge of regeneration methods and techniques.

29. *Second symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission*. Building on the success of the first symposium, the second will continue to build recognition of the Caribbean Sea Commission as the primary high-level science policy forum for marine environmental issues. The three-day symposium will focus on:

(a) Fundraising and joint project development: through the presentation of past success stories and new collaborative project concepts. The session of the symposium will explore South-South and triangular cooperative project opportunities;

(b) Improving information flow at the science policy interface: the session will focus on topics deemed of particular importance by the Commission. Regional experts will present state-of-the-art science, projections and management recommendations to regional decision makers, regional institutions and national representatives.

30. *Caribbean Sea Commission databank*. While the implementation of the databank has been delayed, the Commission remains committed to implementing the project. In 2018, the Sub-Commissions of the Caribbean Sea Commission will be convened to address the implementation process. The key features of the databank remain the same, as follows:

(a) An online database of national and regional projects related to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea;

(b) A database of best practice guides and case studies of management responses;

(c) A database of regional experts to address emerging topics/specific critical issues.

VI. Conclusion

31. The member States of the Association of States and its Caribbean Sea Commission remain committed to the goal of achieving special area recognition for the Caribbean Sea in the context of sustainable development. The Association remains the ideal body for coordinating the management of this shared resource for a number of reasons including, but not limited to, its wide membership base of 35 members and associate members that have coastlines on the Caribbean Sea, the variety of states and protectorates in the Caribbean Region, its geographic scope, its focus on key issues related to sustainable development within its directorates[2] and its hosting of the Caribbean Sea Commission.

32. The Commission remains committed to the activation of the concept of coordinated and collaborative management through the implementation of tangible projects focusing on joint research and information-sharing mechanisms as well as through the building of relationships with appropriate bodies and initiatives, particularly those of the United Nations system.

33. The Association of Caribbean States and the Caribbean Sea Commission also remain committed to supporting greater inclusion of all groups in the decision-making process. This includes incorporating the voices of indigenous communities, women, young people and other vulnerable groups in fulfilling the mandates of the Commission and the wider Association. The Association therefore sees great potential for collaboration between the United Nations and the Association of Caribbean States in areas of advocacy, policy and awareness for these groups.

34. In particular, the Association of Caribbean States and the Commission remain committed to supporting greater participation of young people in the decision-making process. This includes incorporating the voices and perspectives of the region's youth in fulfilling the mandates of the Caribbean Sea Commission and the wider Association.

34. Building on the momentum generated in the 2016–2018 period, the Association of Caribbean States and its Caribbean Sea Commission look forward to reporting to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, in 2020, on a consensus definition of its concept of a special area in the context of sustainable development, following its internal proposed process of consultation as detailed in the present report.

35. Cognizant of the geopolitical complexity, high levels of social and economic dependence and extreme levels of vulnerability of coastal and marine areas of Caribbean member States, as illustrated by the 2017 hurricane season, the Association of Caribbean States is ever aware of the importance of the work of its Caribbean Sea Commission in preserving this common patrimony and core element of Caribbean life and identity. The Association of Caribbean States is thus grateful for the consideration of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Secretary-General in this matter.

[2] The Association of Caribbean States hosts directorates responsible for the issues of sustainable tourism, disaster risk reduction, transportation, and trade and external economic relations.